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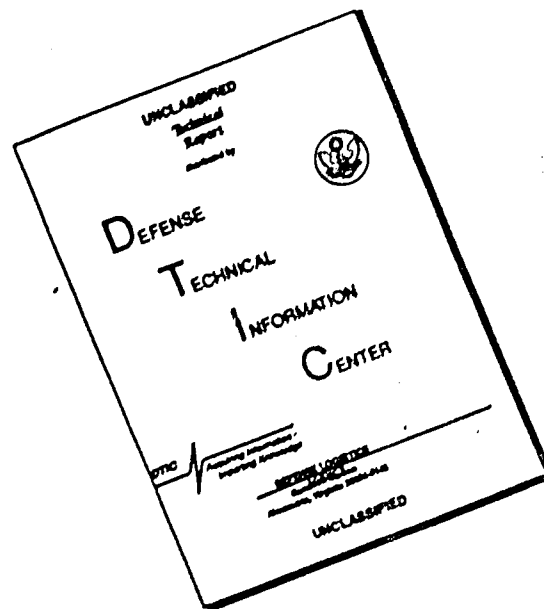


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NATKONG BULGE

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# The First Battle of the Naktong Bulge

Defensive, Retrograde (Behind a River Line)

24th U.S. Infantry Division

4th NKPA Infantry Division

4 - 19 August 1950

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## A B S T R A C T

COMMON REFERENCE: Defense of the Pusan Perimeter.

TYPE OPERATION: Defensive, Retrograde (Behind a River Line).

OPPOSING FORCES: United States: 24th Infantry Division  
North Korea: 4th Infantry Division

SYNOPSIS: During late July, the U.S. 24th Infantry Division conducted a retrograde action against advancing North Korean forces. By early August, the 24th Division had reached its final defensive position along the Nakdong River Line. On the night of 5-6 August, elements of the North Korean 4th Infantry Division crossed the Nakdong River and pressed toward Obong-ni. Local counterattacks by the U.S. 24th Division contained the attackers but could not destroy the North Korean bridgehead. Fighting seesawed until mid August. From 17-19 August the 24th Division and the U.S. 5th Marine Regiment attacked and finally destroyed the remnants of the North Korean Force.

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T. Fehrenbach, This Kind of War.

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R. Gugeler, Combat Actions in Korea, Chap 2.

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## I Introduction to the First Battle of the Naktong Bulge.

### A. The Antagonists

At exactly 0400, 25 June 1950 the pre-dawn stillness in "the Land of the Morning Calm" was shattered by the sound of massive artillery fire. With this eruption began the Korean War, an event which by 15 September would cost the United States 19,165 battle casualties, including 4,280 killed in action.[1] The powerful North Korean Peoples Army (NKPA), originally consisting of 90,000 men backed by 150 tanks,[2] progressed steadily down the peninsula and on 4 August found itself in front of the Naktong River, the last significant barrier blocking their advance. For the next 40 days along this river line, a series of battles occurred which in the final results were critical in determining the outcome of the war. At a position along the river known as the Naktong Bulge, a particularly intense battle occurred from 5-19 August. The purpose of this report is to analyze in detail this engagement which would be later known as the First Battle of the Naktong Bulge. Before this battle can be analyzed, however, it is first necessary to recount some of the war's significant events leading to this engagement.

The attacking NKPA forces moved quickly and by the morning of 26 June their 3rd and 4th Divisions were poised at Uijongbu, the last key hindering terrain north of Seoul. By evening, the defending Republic of Korea (ROK) divisions were shattered and the door to Seoul was open. By the 29th of June, thousands of demoralized ROK soldiers were across the Han River and fleeing southward. General Douglas MacArthur, Commanding General, U.S. Far Eastern Command, decided he must make a personal appraisal of the situation. What he saw on the 29th convinced him that American ground troops must be committed to save South Korea from defeat. On 30 June, President Truman authorized sending two Army infantry divisions into Korea from Japan and for the third time in the 20th Century, major American ground forces were at war.

By dawn on 5 July, the first American ground element, known as Task Force Smith was in place just north of Osan, approximate 30 miles below Seoul. This force was from the 24th Infantry Division, the first ordered into Korea. The division commander, Major General William Dean was forced to send his soldiers in piecemeal. This small American force was soon attacked by two regiments of the NKPA 4th Division, the conquerors of Seoul. Smith held his position as long as he dared but in danger of being encircled, he was soon forced to withdraw.

This pattern of an element of the 24th Division making a stand at a particular position, being encircled by NKPA forces, and then being forced to withdraw would repeat itself over and over again for the next 17 days. By 9 July, General Dean had all three of his regiments, the 19th, 21st and the 34th in position along the Kum River, the first major water barrier south of the Han. Unable to hold this line, the division was ordered on 17 July to move 25 miles south to Taejon. Here, General Walton Walker, commanding Eighth Army, met Dean and explained that he needed two more days delay in Taejon so that the arriving 25th Infantry and the 1st Cavalry Divisions could become established to the city's east. Taejon fell on the 20th and the 24th Division withdrew east to Yongdong where it could begin to be reconstituted. In 17 days of combat the division had been driven back 100 miles, lost enough material

to equip a full division, and had experienced 30% personnel losses.[3] But without this sacrifice, U. S. ground forces in Korea could not have become established.

This is how the partially rehabilitated 24th Division found itself on 4 August established in defensive positions along the east bank of the Nakdong. Across the river to the west lay its old arch enemy, the NKPA 4th Division. Beginning on the evening of the 4th of August these two rivals would again find themselves locked in deadly combat.

#### B. The Sources

In addition to the two sources already noted in this chapter, there were 16 other sources referenced by the authors of this report (listed as entries [4]-[19] in section I. D.). Of the 18 total sources three are primary, i.e., they represent actual first-hand war diary information collected by some of the major participants in this campaign. Most of the secondary sources referenced were also written by military authors and were published by agencies of the U.S. Government. Therefore, this report has a decidedly military perspective, in contrast to some magazine or newspaper articles about the battle written by civilian correspondents.

Additionally, most of the sources referenced were written during or soon after the Korean War. The overall performance and sacrifice made by the 24th Division was not, at that time, fully appreciated. The necessary lapse of time required to put the significance of this battle into proper perspective had not yet occurred.

A few sources used in this report, however, are of recent publication. These sources were most useful in Chapter V. Here they served as guidelines to assess the significance of this action as it relates to the U.S. Army's current Airland Battle doctrine.

#### C. The Battle Analysis

In Chapter II, this report will review the strategic setting of this battle by concentrating on the national objectives and military systems of the opposing countries. Chapter III will discuss many key elements affecting the tactical situation. The actual battle itself will be discussed in Chapter IV. In Chapter V the report will conclude by assessing the significance of the action.

#### D. Notes

[1] Roy E. Appleman, "South to the Nakdong, North to the Yalu," United States Army in the Korean War, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), p. 547.

[2] T.R. Fehrenbach, This Kind of War (New York: Macmillan Company, 1963), p. 13.

[3] Ibid, p. 147.

[4] 24th Infantry Division War Diary.

[5] 21st Infantry Regiment War Diary.

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- [9] William F. Dean, General Dean's Story (New York: The Viking Press, 1954).
- [10] Forrest K. Kleinman, "The Tactician of Danger Forward," Army, Vol 9, No 4 (November 1958).
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- [15] R. Gugeler, Combat Actions in Korea.
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- [17] MAJ Robert A. Doughty, "The Evolution of U.S. Army Tactical Doctrine, 1946-76," Leavenworth Papers, August 1979.
- [18] The Army, Navy, Air-Force Journal, 5 August 1950.
- [19] Dr. William G. Robertson, Excerpt from forthcoming Leavenworth Paper.

## II The Strategic Setting

### A. The Principal Antagonists

#### 1. The United States

This chapter will begin to discuss some of the factors leading to the Korean war by considering each of the antagonists and their relationship to one another. In 1950 the United States was still a young country which gained, by revolution, its independence from Britain in the late 1700's. During the next 125 years this country was less concerned with external affairs than with developing its rich natural resources. However, by 1900, the United States had developed into a world power. Within the next 45 years it would fight in two world wars and at the end of World War II emerged as the most powerful nation on the face of the earth.

The policies of the United States reflected its place in history. A continuing theme in American policy was isolationism. The Monroe Doctrine was a policy that sought to prevent the Americas from being tainted by European influence. Fortunately for the country, its protection by the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and weak, usually friendly neighbors made isolationism feasible. Another theme running through American policy was its idealism. Americans felt their system of government was the best in the world and tended to judge other nations based on their adherence to American democratic values. Contrary to the opinions of some, Americans were willing to wage limited war to realize limited aims. In fact, all its wars before World War I, except the Civil War, were limited wars. Once the United States realized its aims of independence, freedom to trade, or land, it was willing to follow an inward, isolationist national policy. However, in the 20th Century this changed. World War I was fought to defeat the Germans, not for any limited gain such as to restore France's territory. Americans were conditioned by their leaders to think of World War I as the war to end all wars and to believe that success would make the world safe for democracy. Yet within 25 years the U.S. would find itself in another world war. During the 1930's and early 1940's Americans were isolationists, even pacifists, as they viewed the politics of appeasement and aggression in Europe and Asia. With the attack on Pearl Harbor, Americans felt the interwar policies of compromise and negotiation were false gods. They waged a war in which their only aims were to totally defeat their enemies and cause their unconditional surrender. Its citizens wanted to return to a national policy free from foreign entanglements. They were not prepared for the burdens of America in the postwar world.

The armed forces of the United States also reflected its unique place in history. There developed, in the U.S., a conflict between those who supported a professional military and those who supported a citizen soldier that sprang to his country's defense in time of need. Due somewhat to the security situation of the U.S., her conflicts were, before 1918, generally small unit actions conducted as result of the expansion of the nation's frontiers. Therefore, the small unit leader and individual soldier were the most experienced and were most idealized. Due also to its security and citizen soldier tradition, U.S. military forces were emasculated at the conclusion of wars so that its citizen soldiers could return home. Throughout its history, the U.S. government garnered support of its wars by relating the war to defense of the homeland. Another theme is that whenever the military forces of the U.S. were used, this action was seen as a last resort; every other means to solve a problem had failed. The U.S. tended to view war and politics as separate entities in contrast to other nations which viewed war as part of politics. One might say that Americans had more faith that war could solve problems. But how

did the U.S. military perform in war? In 1945 Americans felt that they had won every war in which they had participated. However, when the wars are examined in detail several patterns emerge. First, there is very little original American doctrine for the conduct of war. Generally, Americans copied European doctrine except for that dealing with the conduct of Indian fighting. Before the Civil War, small unit tactics was the doctrine for much of the military. By 1900, Americans, because their economic strength, often equated firepower with doctrine. Yet paradoxically in the period 1920-1945, American mechanized doctrine lagged behind much of the world. In fact, amphibious and naval air operations were the only areas in which American doctrine was superior and original. Interwar military training was not impressive, nor was the condition of military equipment. However, during World War II, training and equipping the army was much improved over previous conflicts.

## 2. North Korea

The other antagonist, North Korea, had a completely different history. The Koreans attribute their nation's founding to the semimythical figure, Ki-ja, who reportedly brought early Chinese culture to Korea about 1122 B.C. The nation's recorded history dates from 57 B.C., when the tribes of Korea were organizing themselves into three kingdoms which waged sporadic warfare with one another. These wars continued intermittently for some seven hundred years, until the kingdom of Silla subdued her enemies and unified the country.

China began playing an important role in peninsular events almost from the dawn of Korean history. It was through China that Buddhism came to Korea. Chinese patterns of thought and culture, especially the classical literature of Confucius, had great effect on Korea's development. Beginning with the T'ang dynasty and through the year 1895 the Chinese asserted a claim of suzerainty over Korea. But Chinese control was nominal, aimed at perpetuating a form of military alliance and insuring Korea's eternal loyalty to China.

As a result of three catastrophic invasions by Mongolian, Japanese, and Manchurian forces, the Korean people retreated into national isolation to bind up their wounds. From 1630 to 1850, the Koreans fended off contacts with the outside world. Western vessels which attempted to find haven in Korean waters were attacked and sometimes burned. Western missionaries were sought out and slain. Unfortunately, this isolation proved to be a calamity for Korea, for it stopped the clock of Korean history at a time when the industrial revolution was taking place in Europe. While Korea and the rest of Asia stagnated, the Europeans with their cannon and modern implements were sailing and conquering in the four corners of the world.

Korea's modern period can be said to stem from the signing of the Japanese treaty and becomes an integral part of the story of Japan's efforts to detach the peninsula entirely from its ancient dependency on China. In the years that followed the treaty of 1876 and before the United States first appeared on the scene with a treaty obtained in 1882, Japan made significant progress in infiltrating the peninsula. Japanese activities soon began to affect Korean society, resulting in the growth of a progressive movement. Late in the year 1884, a reform group, aided by some Japanese in Seoul, arose in revolt. The revolt was doomed from the start, since the Chinese, now showing renewed interest in their ancient dependency, maintained a military force near Seoul to support the status quo. This conflict would continue until 1896, when a new foreign power, Russia, would emerge as a claimant for Korean influence. Russian diplomats also were increasingly active in China. In May 1896, a secret treaty of alliance aimed at Japan was signed between

Russia and China. In this treaty the Chinese consented to the construction of a railway across Manchuria in the direction of Vladivostok.

Japan now was awakened to the fact she would have to defeat the Russians in Korea and Manchuria before her ambitions could be fulfilled. In her declaration of war proclaimed on February 10, 1904, Japan charged the Russians had been threatening the independence of Korea. The outcome of the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-1905 was even more astounding than that of the Sino-Japanese war of the previous decade. The Russian armies were soundly defeated by the Japanese. Japan's decisive victory over Russia on land and sea signaled the rise of a new world power. In Russia it stirred the revolutionary fervor of 1905, the prelude to 1917. In Korea it signaled that country's death knell.

In the bleak 1920's and 1930's, the independence movement developed three centers: (1) the "Russian" Koreans, located in the Soviet maritime provinces; (2) the "Chinese" Koreans, who made up the bulk of the Korean Provisional Government and a few army divisions supported by Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist government; and (3) the "American" Koreans, located in Hawaii and Washington. Korea's resurrection as a nation remained a dream until Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor and American involvement in World War II.

The Cairo Declaration, which marked the formal re-entrance of the United States into Korean affairs, was issued on December 1, 1943. At Cairo, President Franklin Roosevelt, Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek pledged: "The aforesaid three great powers, mindful of the enslavement of the people of Korea, are determined that in due course Korea shall become free and independent." [1] No further thought of this would come about until the men of SWINK, the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee, would become suspicious of the idea of having Russians in Korea, but no Americans. By the time the men of SWINK began the formulation of policy the Russians had crossed the Yalu River. The 38th parallel looked like an appropriate place to divide the two forces to keep things manageable.

Elections were held on 10 MAY 1948 in the south. The conservative parties behind Syngman Rhee came legally to power, and by 15 August the Republic of Korea had been established. Russia protested. Then, in September 1948, Russia established the Korean Democratic People's Republic, in the North.

The political climate in the United States was one of trying to return to internal normalcy and an isolationist foreign policy. However, Americans were shocked at the loss of the East European countries to Soviet control and at the loss of China. The Alger Hiss scandal and the unmasking of Soviet spies in the government further heightened the level of anxiety. It was during this period that "The Great Conspiracy" theory was in vogue. As a whole, the American people were dissatisfied with the containment policy which they saw as defeatist. By 1950, polls revealed that Americans had little faith in President Truman's leadership. The brilliant, but haughty, Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, was under fire for the Hiss affair. Many Americans felt that the Department of Defense had sacrificed military preparedness in the interest of economy. In short, the administration's containment policy had not been "sold" to the American people. In 1950, polls revealed that U.S. citizens were more concerned with Europe and less familiar with Asia. Fifty-seven percent expected a war in Europe within five years. Most of the population supported the U.N.

## **B. Korean-U.S. Relations**

What were Korean-U.S. relations during this crucial period? During the 1800's and just before 1950, Americans had shown little interest in Korea. With no economic importance and few ethnic Koreans in the U.S., diplomatic relations were casual. With the Japanese capitulation in 1945, one of the tasks was to accept the surrender of the Japanese forces on the mainland of Asia. However, there was a power vacuum in the North Pacific. Britain, the pre-war power, was exhausted so the U.S. was forced to fill her shoes. The U.S. and the Russians agreed to accept the surrender of the Japanese Army in Korea. This was part of the 1945 agreement at Potsdam to insure Russia's entry into the Pacific War. The line to divide the surrender zones was the 38th parallel, an arbitrary line with no basis in geography. By a continuation of their lightning thrusts into Manchuria and Korea in August of 1945, the Soviets could have conquered all of Korea. The U.S. could have done little to prevent it. Three possible reasons that the Soviets did not conquer all Korea are that they did not anticipate their rapid conquest of Manchuria and Korea; they were too intent on dismantling Manchurian (fifty percent) and North Korean (thirty to forty percent) industrial facilities and shipping it to Russia; or the U.S.S.R. did not want to challenge the U.S. at that time and place. Nevertheless, the Soviets reached the 38th parallel and halted there on 26 August 1945. The U.S. command decided the only available U.S. force to accept the surrender was General Hodges' XIV Corps in Okinawa. On 9 September, General Hodges accepted the Japanese surrender and began what has been characterized as a "harsh and fumbling" four-year occupation. Americans occupied a country that the Japanese had ruled from 1895-1945. This Japanese rule was one in which cruelty, execution, and torture abounded and which developed no Korean governmental infrastructure. The Americans saw the Koreans as a defeated enemy but attempted a benign rule. After an initial peaceful interlude, the Koreans saw the kindness of the Americans as weakness and began a series of demonstrations, riots, and guerilla actions which bewildered the Americans. In the confused period of the late '40s, America still had not grasped the strategic significance of Korea, a historical invasion route to either Japan or China. Public support for the occupation fell. From the various factions in the U.S. zone, Syngman Rhee emerged as the leading rightist. Rhee wanted the U.S. out of Korea, and his anti-communist stance insured U.S. support. By 1947, the U.S. was tired of going it alone and tried to get U.N. support for resolution of the problem. In 1947, the U.N. stated that one of its aims was a united Korea governed under democratic principles. However, when the U.N. representatives attempted to enter the Soviet Zone in 1947 they were barred. In 1948, the South Korean government was installed and seated in the U.N., and the U.S. military government was removed. On 10 September 1948, the North Korean government was installed. Both governments laid claim to all of Korea. Although U.S. forces were in South Korea in 1948, the last of these were withdrawn in 1949 as U.S. military officials saw little strategic value in Korea. Both the leaders of North and South Korea threatened to invade the other's country to unite the peninsula. To prevent the South Koreans from carrying out their threat the U.S. did not arm the South Koreans adequately. The South Koreans were not provided tanks, fighter aircraft, heavy weapons, or anti-tank weapons. Not only were the South Koreans unable to conduct offensive operations, they could not defend themselves.

Therefore, just before the beginning of the Korean War, the U.S. military did not see Korea as vital to the defense of the Pacific basin, the State Department saw Korea as a country lost to communism as a result of failure of policy, and the American people had little awareness of our presence in Korea. American leaders seemed equally unsupportive of Korea. In February 1949, General MacArthur excluded Korea from the Far East Defense perimeter. Part of the JCS rationale for the removal of U.S. troops from Korea was the lack of strategic significance of Korea to the U.S. Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, made a now famous speech on 12 January

1950, in which he excluded South Korea from the U.S. defense perimeter and did not provide guarantees for its safety.

### C. The Causes of the Conflict

Perhaps the first question to be answered when studying the Korean War is "Why did the North Koreans attack South Korea on 25 June 1950?" Most experts agree that the U.S.S.R. knew of and gave backing to the North Korean war plans. Several experts feel that the plan was conceived by the Soviets. One specifies that the plan was drawn up by the Russian General Antonov in the late 1940s. Several indicators of this were the return of the Korean Volunteer Corps (KVC) to North Korea in 1949 and 1950, the rapid training and outfitting of the North Koreans in 1949 and 1950, and the redeployment of the Chinese 4th Field Army. The redeployment of the 4th Field Army and return of the KVC meant that one-third of the North Korean forces had combat experience. There is little argument that Russia approved of the attack plans. Viewed in this manner then what were the Russian and North Korean aims and why did the attack occur when it did? The North Koreans had the obvious objective to unify Korea under their rule. Soviet aims can only be speculated upon. The most obvious answer is that their only objective was a unified communist Korea. At the time of the invasion U.S. officials were concerned with several other possible aims. These must be examined because U.S. perception of these possible Soviet aims shaped how the war was fought. One explanation for the attack, which caused the U.S. to limit its efforts in Korea and to feel that this war was "the wrong war, in the wrong place, at the wrong time," was that the attack in Korea was a feint to tie down U.S. forces in support of a Soviet main threat in Europe. This theory held that the war was global in orientation, not Asiatic. In hindsight, many current scholars feel this was an incorrect theory for the U.S.S.R. and North Korea never signed a mutual defense treaty before June 1950 and the U.S.S.R. did not create other crises during the period. The other concern of U.S. planners was that the attack was a test of U.S. resolve in northeast Asia which, if unchecked, would encourage the Soviets to attempt world domination. Present day writers say that the Soviet goals were probably to prevent a Tokyo-Seoul-Washington alliance, to intimidate Japan, to gain a good defensive perimeter for the Soviet Maritime provinces, and to help foster Soviet ambitions for world domination through military force. One such writer feels that the Soviet support was a result of being checked by NATO in Europe. On the timing of the attack, speculation is that the Soviets saw an opportunity to exploit the recent U.S. withdrawal, South Korean domestic turmoil, and the strategic weakness of the U.S. Far Eastern policy. One opinion says that Soviet planners discounted a U.S. military response based on the weak U.S. forces in the area, and the little money or support previously provided to the South Koreans.

Regardless of the causes, the North Koreans struck just before dawn on 25 June 1950. Within days the U.S. had decided to intervene. Why? This can best be looked at by examining the national purpose, vital interests, objectives, and policy. The U.S. national purpose was to prevent through containment and collective security Soviet domination of the U.S. (and the world). To achieve this purpose there were several perceived vital interests. First, it was essential to avoid another world war. Communism was to be opposed without provoking war. If there was war, it should be limited to avoid overcommitting U.S. forces or provoking Russia. Another vital interest was to prevent the spread of communism. Therefore, the U.S. could not appear to its allies to be soft on communism. In North East Asia this meant Japan, who was coping with communist agitation and pressure. Another vital interest was to prevent the U.S.S.R. from controlling the entire Eurasian land mass. Since the U.S. supported collective security through the U.N., another interest was to prevent the U.N. from losing prestige and becoming ineffective. To achieve these



interests there were several objectives. One was to deter local Soviet aggressions, or if that failed to stop the aggression and cause the immediate withdrawal of communist forces, as had happened in Iran. Force was to be met with collective Western action. Based on the West's experience with Hitler's use of negotiation and appeasement, the American public believed that there should be no compromise with dictators, evil should be stamped out. Note that this feeling contradicted "containment."

These objectives led to certain policy decisions. Inaction in the face of aggression was seen as a weakness which would lead to World War III or at least the weakening of the West, the U.S. and the U.N. Since the U.N. assumed some of the responsibility for South Korea in 1947, the U.S. sought to garner U.N. support and protection for South Korea. Truman believed that the counter-agent to communism was nationalism, but his policy of fostering nationalist feelings was uneven and often counter productive. Korea was seen as a test of U.S. resolve and that this was the time to stand up to the communists in North East Asia. When U.S. forces were committed the following assumptions were held: the attack was probably an isolated attack, the U.S. had superior arms, and neither the Soviet Union or China would probably intervene with troops. In short, the U.S. committed forces to support its policy of containment, to prevent World War III (a la Munich), and to "stand up" to the Soviets and bolster our allies.

This intervention was made easier by public, congressional, and media support. When North Korea attacked, the public, press, and Congress supported U.S. intervention as part of the U.N. force, as a way to prevent global war, and they supported the initial U.N. aim of restoring the ante-bellum territories of North and South Korea. In late June, letters to the President were running ten to one in favor of intervention. Congress and the press as a whole supported intervention, but leftists and, interestingly enough, arch-conservatives opposed it.

#### D. Notes

[1] State Department, **Selected Documents on American Foreign Policy**, Government Printing Office, Washington DC. 1951, p 10.

### III The Tactical Situation

#### A. Background

When the North Korean People's Army stormed across the 38th parallel on 25 June 1950 in a full scale invasion of South Korea, it soon became apparent that the ROK Army was woefully unprepared to resist the attack successfully. President Truman authorized supplying the South Koreans with ammunition and military supplies. As the South Koreans fell back, the President authorized the 7th fleet to secure Kimp'o airfield to protect the evacuation of Americans. On the 26th of June the President authorized the use of air and naval power south of the 38th parallel. Upon invasion, the United States had brought the matter before the U.N. Security Council where the Russian delegate was absent in protest over the seating of Taiwan. The Security Council had requested an immediate cease-fire and demanded the North Koreans withdraw north of the 38th parallel. On 27 June when there was no response, the U.N. committed forces to "repel the attack and restore the peace." Perhaps the most significant action on 27 June was when the President ordered the 7th Fleet into the Formosa Straits to prevent either a communist invasion of Taiwan or a nationalist attack on mainland China. Seoul fell on 28 June. On 29 June only 25,000 of the 98,000 South Korean troops could be accounted for. General MacArthur requested ground troops, but national leaders, fearing an attack elsewhere did not provide them. On 30 June General MacArthur asked for U.S. ground combat troops to hold the air base and airfield at Pusan, and he authorized air and naval forces to strike North Korean targets. At the onset of the invasion, China watched the action but provided no support. Chinese papers in June were confident of an early North Korean victory. As the South Korean retreat continued, American public and congressional frustration began to mount. Congress was pressured into calling up reserve units. Although the public supported the U.N. action. On 30 June as Congressman Lucas spoke of pursuit north of the 38th parallel, the Han river line was breached, and there seemed to be little hope of halting the invasion before more of the country was captured.[1]

The armed forces of the United States were in poor shape in 1950. As usual, American forces were gutted after the end of World War II. Immediately after VJ day, demonstrations erupted in which U.S. troops demanded to go home. Within a year the greatest military machine the world had seen was emasculated. During the late forties, America's military might was allowed to ebb further, based on the false premise that atomic weapons would render conventional war obsolete. Despite the rise in tension in the late forties, little was done to upgrade the military. Of \$30 billion requested in 1950, the Department of Defense received \$13.2 billion. Forty-three percent of the Army's enlisted personnel were in mental category IV and V. Of the ninety Army divisions in 1945, only fourteen remained, four of which were training divisions. Additionally, the Army had the European Constabulary and nine independent Regimental Combat Teams (RCT). Each divisional regiment had only two maneuver battalions and each artillery battalion was short one battery. Of an authorized strength of 630,000 only 592,000 were present. The USAF had only forty-eight air groups and the mighty U.S. Navy had a large portion of its fleet in mothballs. Of the six Marine Divisions in 1945, only two remained. The military picture in the Far East was even more grim. Army strength consisted of four understrength (seventy percent) divisions, 7th, 25th, 24th, and 1st, in Japan, the 5th RCT in Hawaii, and the 29th Regt in Okinawa. The four divisions in Japan, with a strength of 82,000, were poorly trained and equipped. As occupation forces they conducted little field training, were physically soft, and had not exercised on any level larger than the company. Their equipment was worn World War II issue. They were psychologically unprepared for war. There were ninety-two World War II tanks

in the whole Far East Theater. The Air Force Far Eastern Command consisted of nine air groups with 350 fighters but only four squadrons were within reach of Korea. One-third of the Navy was in the Pacific and one-fifth of this third was in the Far East. This consisted of a cruiser and destroyer in the Far Eastern Command, and a carrier, heavy cruiser, eight destroyers, and three subs in the 7th fleet. The closest Marine division was an understrength one at Camp Pendleton, California. When brought to strength this division would consist of about one-half World War II veterans and one-half young, unseasoned troops, fresh from boot camp. The doctrine of this entire American force was that of World War II.

The United States government was totally unprepared for the disaster befalling the Republic of Korea. For some time, it had assumed that the only possible conflict would be a general war and most planning had been devoted to that single contingency. Western Europe had received first priority in both personnel and equipment, leaving the Far East Command to make do with lower levels of both. General Douglas MacArthur was willing to use the limited means at his disposal to aid the South Korean government in repelling the invasion. American air and naval units were immediately thrown into the fight, but they soon proved insufficient to halt the North Korean drive. On 30 June, President Harry Truman authorized MacArthur to commit U.S. ground forces to the struggle, a move which MacArthur had recommended earlier. As a result, at 0315 on 1 July, U.S. Eighth Army issued an operations order sending the 24th Infantry Division to Korea.[2]

In some respects the 24th Division, commanded by Major General William F. Dean, was an unfortunate choice. Of the four divisions in Japan, it had both the lowest total strength (12,197 on 30 June) and the lowest combat effectiveness rating (65 percent on 30 May). Like the other units in MacArthur's Far East Command, its troops were not trained and equipped for sustained combat, nor even conditioned for rigorous physical activity. Only about 15 percent of officers and men were combat veterans. The division lacked three infantry battalions and four field artillery batteries. A single company of M-24 Chaffee light tanks served as its only armor. Since similar shortcomings were present in all his divisions, MacArthur chose the 24th Division solely because of its location. Stationed in Southern Japan, the 24th was the division closest to Korea, and could be deployed to that country most quickly. Several thousand men were, therefore, transferred to the 24th Division from other units, raising its strength to 15,965 men by the time of its departure.[3]

Under the terms of the operations order committing the 24th Division to action, a small combat force was transported to Korea by air while the remainder of the division followed by water. The first force of two reinforced companies, known as Task Force Smith, arrived at Pusan on 2 July and moved north. By 5 July, most of the division had reached Korea. On the same day, Task Force Smith was crushed north of Osan by North Korean armor. Realizing the gravity of the situation, General Dean rushed his three regiments (the 19th, 21st, and 34th Infantry Regiments) forward to establish a series of blocking positions. One by one these positions--at Ch'onan, Chonui, and Choch'iwon--were outflanked or overrun, and the 24th Division reeled backward in retreat. After one week of fighting, the division had suffered heavy casualties, including 1,500 men missing in action. The 21st Infantry numbered only 1,100 men, less than 50 percent of its authorized strength, and the 34th Infantry was operating under its third commander in a week. Division strength on 14 July was 11,440 men.[4]

Disasters continued to strike Dean's command as July progressed. In a series of actions at the Kum River on 14-16 July, the North Korean 3rd and 4th Divisions

again outflanked the defenders. The 63rd Field Artillery Battalion supporting the 34th Infantry was destroyed, while the 52nd Field Artillery Battalion supporting the 19th Infantry lost eight howitzers. The 19th Infantry itself lost two commanders before extricating itself from the trap. Several days later a similar debacle occurred when the same two regiments were routed from their positions at Taejon. In that action, the 24th Division lost 1,150 men out of 3,933 engaged, including General Dean who was listed as missing in action. In some units, the losses were even greater: Company L of the 34th Regiment lost 107 men out of 153 engaged, Battery A of the 11th Field Artillery Battalion lost all its 155-mm howitzers, and the 24th Quartermaster Company lost 30 out of 34 trucks.[5]

By the time the 24th Division was relieved by the 1st Cavalry Division on 22 July, its strength was down to only 8,660 men. During the previous 17 days, it had been driven back 100 miles by elements of two North Korean divisions. It had suffered over 30 percent casualties, including severe losses in field grade officers. More than 2,400 men were missing in action, among them the division commander. During the long retreat, almost a division's worth of equipment had been destroyed or abandoned. Their morale weakened by constant retreats, their strength sapped by dysentery and the heat of the Korean summer, the men of the 24th Division badly needed time to rest and refit before again entering the fight.

The ordeal suffered by the 24th Division brought many problems to light that had been overlooked in the peacetime army. Equipment shortages that had not seemed serious for a division on occupation duty--such as telephone, wire, radio batteries, and mortar ammunition--now proved to be crucial. Such maps as were available were discovered to be frequently inaccurate, especially for plotting artillery fire. Garrison duty in Japan had not physically conditioned troops for active operations in a mountainous terrain in mid-summer. The large number of officer casualties exposed the Army's lack of depth in experienced combat commanders, and inexperienced replacements had to learn their trade by on-the-job training.[6]

Of equal or greater importance than the Army's physical deficiencies was that its tactical doctrine was based upon full strength units under a triangular system of maneuver units. The doctrine manuals presupposed that each regimental commander would be able to deploy three battalions, the normal configuration being two battalions in the line while one remained in reserve. No matter which course was adopted, the regiment's tactical integrity was impaired, if not destroyed. The flexibility inherent in the triangular system was lost, and flanks became much more difficult to protect. No American officers in Korea had previous experience with such a tactical system, nor had the Army schools produced a modified doctrine more applicable to a two-battalion regiment. Everyone had assumed that the peacetime formations would have their missing components restored before being committed to action, but this assumption had proven false in the summer of 1950.[7]

On the day following its relief by the 1st Cavalry Division, the 24th Division received a new commander, Major General John Houston Church. A veteran of both World Wars and a holder of the Distinguished Service Cross, Church was no stranger to the situation faced by the 24th Division. He had been in Korea since 27 June, first leading the General Headquarters (GHQ) Advance Command and Liaison Group as MacArthur's personal representative and later serving on General Dean's staff. Promoted to Major General on 18 July, the slim, taciturn Church hoped to have a few days grace in which to restore the battered 24th Division the fighting trim.[8]

Under an operational directive issued by Eighth Army on 19 July, the 24th Division was assigned to Army reserve status, with residual responsibility for

protecting an airfield near P'ochang on Korea's east coast. This respite lasted only one day, for, on 24 July, Lieutenant General Walton Walker Eighth Army Commander, ordered the division to shift southward to counter a North Korean flanking drive near Chinju. The 21st Infantry remained around P'ochang-dong under Eighth Army control, while the 19th and 34th regiments took up positions at Chinju and Ko'chang, respectively. Action flared at both locations during the last 3 days of July, as the North Koreans continued to gain ground at the expense of the 24th Division. In hopes of stabilizing the situation, Eighth Army returned the 21st Infantry to division control and that regiment relieved the 34th Infantry in the line on 31 July. The 34th, so badly handled at Taejon that it had temporarily "lost its entity as a striking force," passed into division reserve.[9]

In the face of continued North Korean pressure, General Walker on 1 August ordered a phased withdrawal of Eighth Army behind the Nakdong River. This maneuver would shorten Walker's front while at the same time using the natural barrier of the Nakdong to better protect the major port of Pusan. As part of the plan, the 24th Division, which had been thinly spread covering Eighth Army's southern flank, was ordered to concentrate its regiments in a sector stretching 25 air miles northward from the junction of the Nam and the Nakdong Rivers. The 25th Division assumed responsibility for the sector south of the 24th while the 1st Cavalry Division extended the line to the north. The redeployment was to be completed during the night of 2/3 August.[10]

Although the constant retreats had been necessary, Walker feared that Eighth Army was losing whatever aggressiveness it once may have had. As early as 29 July, he had issued to officers of the 25th Division a ringing "stand or die" statement, which had been quickly circulated to other Eighth Army units as well.[11] Now on 2 August, in the midst of still another retrograde movement, Walker dispatched to all maneuver units a message regarding counterattack:

Before assumption of the offensive, daily counterattacks will be made by all units to keep the enemy off balance, disorganized, and prevent him from launching a coordinated attack against our positions. Recent operations by ROK forces have demonstrated the value of frequent counterattacks to regain lost portions of the battle position and delay further advances of the enemy. Counterattack is a decisive element of the defense. The success of a counterattack depends largely upon surprise, boldness, and speed of execution.[12]

For several days, the 24th Division had little or no opportunity to make counterattacks as it completed its withdrawal behind the Nakdong. First to move was the 34th Infantry, which crossed the Nakdong on 2 August and was in position along the river west of Yongsan by 2300. The 21st Infantry and the 17th ROK Regiment, which had been serving as rear-guard, disengaged during the evening and followed the 34th across the river. Shortly after the last units reached the east bank on the morning of 3 August, engineers demolished the Koryung-Taegu bridge. It joined the other bridge in the division sector, on the Ch'ogye-Ch'angnyong road, which had been blown on the previous evening. With both bridges down, the Nakdong became a shallow moat behind which all elements of the 24th Division concentrated. Division Forward Headquarters was at Ch'angnyong and Division Rear moved northward from Masan to Miryang. By the evening of 3 August, all division units had reached the new sector except the 19th Infantry, which had just been relieved near Masan by 25th Division units and was en route by rail and motor.[13]

The Eighth Army's withdrawal behind the Nakdong River line in early August

marked a new phase in the Korean conflict. Previously, Walker's divisions had operated alone with their flanks in the air, which permitted their successive defensive positions to be turned easily by North Korean units. Concern for their flanks had contributed heavily to the tendency of American units to retreat more hastily than their commanders desired. Now, for the first time, the land area held by American and ROK forces had contracted enough so that a nearly continuous defensive line could be formed to shield the port of Pusan. The resulting Pusan Perimeter ran about 100 miles northward from the Korea Strait, then 50 miles eastward to the Sea of Japan. The western face of the perimeter was held by American units, from south to north the 25th Division around Masan, the 24th Division behind the Nakdong covering Ch'angnyong, and the 1st Cavalry Division also behind the Nakdong in the vicinity of Waegwan. Extending eastward to the coast were the remaining elements of the ROK Army. With its flanks momentarily secured, and a few reserves in place, Eighth Army faced the continuing North Korean assaults with greater confidence than before.[14]

## **B. The Area of Operations**

### **1. Climate and Weather**

The entire period of the battle was characterized by extremely hot weather. The heavy atmosphere and bright sunlight, coupled with the extremely rough and hilly terrain caused more casualties than were lost through enemy action. Between 7 August and 21 August there were many heat exhaustion casualties resulting from the severe heat and humidity.

Temperatures during this period were between 105 degrees and 70 degrees. Rain during the period was scarce. Only on one occasion did rain and low clouds make close air support of U.S. troops impossible. There was little fog and visibility was good both on the ground and in the air.

The most significant impact of the weather on U.S. soldiers was the extreme heat. They suffered heavy casualties from heat strokes and efficiency was greatly reduced since they were not acclimatized.

### **2. Terrain (OCOCCA)**

The most important terrain feature for both the U.S. and the North Koreans (helping the former in their defense and hindering the latter in their offensive) was the Nakdong River, the second largest river in Korea. It formed a large moat in front of almost three-fourths of the perimeter, varying in width from one-quarter to half a mile and more than six feet in depth.

The Nakdong curves westward opposite Yongsan in a wide semi-circular loop. The bulge of land formed by this river loop measures four miles from east to west and five miles from north to south (this area was called the Nakdong Bulge by the U.S. troops).

Hills come down close to both the banks of the Nakdong and rice paddy valleys of varying sizes run between these hills. The hills bordering the lower Nakdong (below Taegu) on the eastern side rise to 1,200 feet further away from the river (3 to 4 miles) they climb to 2,500 feet. On the western side the hills are higher reaching 2,000 feet to 3,000 feet.

The line of the Nakdong was organized by the U.S. troops into a series of

strong points on the highest hills, affording views of both the river and the natural avenues of approaches. During the daytime they served as observation posts and at night as listening posts. Probable crossing sites were physically defended and troops were disposed to hold the key terrain and the meager road network (which were all important). The 24th Division held the line of the lower Nakdong for a distance of 25 air miles, or a river front of about 40 miles.

The North Koreans had four avenues of approach into the Pusan Perimeter available: (1) through Masan past the junction of the Nam and the Nakdong Rivers, (2) through the Nakdong Bulge to the rail and road lines at Miryang, and (3) through Taegu, and (4) through Kyongju and down the eastern corridor.

In the nine miles of front in the Nakdong Bulge, two valleys formed entrances from the river into the hill masses stretching eastward. The northern entrance was at the Ohang village ferry crossing (one of the six ferry crossing sites in the area). The other natural entrance into this zone lay four miles south at the under side of the bulge.[15][16]

### C. Comparison of Opposing Forces

#### 1. Strength and Composition

(Note: Strength is the description of a unit in terms of men, weapons, and equipment. Composition is the identification and organization of units.)

The two principle antagonists at the start of the battle were the NKPA 4th Infantry Division with an estimated strength of 7,000 men [17] and the U.S. 24th Infantry Division which reported a strength of 14,540 men [18] present on 4 August 1950. The NKPA 4th Division started the war with an approximate strength of 11,000, therefore, had suffered about 36 percent casualties not counting replacements. The 24th Division was understrength at the time of original commitment to the Korean war and by the time of the Nakdong River battle was estimated to be about 40 percent combat effective.[19]

These two units were light infantry divisions. They lacked common heavy weapon systems. The 24th Division had not brought its tanks to the Republic of Korea. Tanks supporting the NKPA 4th Division generally had become casualties of war by this stage and were not a significant factor in the battle. Neither side used fighting vehicles. The principle heavy weapons for both contestants were artillery pieces, although both sides used various sizes of mortars effectively.

The NKPA 4th Division artillery reported that 12 guns (76mm and 122mm howitzers combined) were available on 5 August 1950.[20] At the start of the war the standard NKPA division artillery consisted of 24-76mm and 12-122mm howitzers. By contrast the 24th Division reported 17-105mm and 12-155mm howitzers available at the end of July 1950.[21]

#### 2. Unit Identifications

(Note: Unit identification consists of name or numbers of the unit, type, relative size, and subordination.)

The NKPA 4th Division under the command of Major General Lee Kwon Mu consisted of three infantry regiments. The division was estimated to be at a strength of 7,000 with about 1,500 men per regiment.[22]

4th Infantry Division (NKPA)	7,000
5th Infantry Regiment	1,500
16th Infantry Regiment	2,300 [23]
1-16 Infantry Bn	500
2-16 Infantry Bn	500
3-16 Infantry Bn	800
16 Artillery	300
other assigned units	200
18th Infantry Regiment	1,500
Other assigned units	1,700

The 24th Division entered the battle with a strength of 14,540. Major General John H. Church commanded the division which consisted of three understrength infantry regiments. On line were the 34th Infantry Regiment in the south reporting on 8 August 1950, 1,100 present for duty; and in the north, the 21st Infantry Regiment reported a strength of 1,800. The remaining regiment, the 19th Infantry Regiment in division reserve counted 1,700 men present.[24] Other units such as division artillery, 24th Division Reconnaissance Company, 3d Engineer Combat Battalion, 78th Heavy Tank Battalion (less tanks), etc. made up the remainder of the division's strength.

The 24th division was almost twice as large as the force it faced in terms of total strength, but at the foxhole level the three regiments of the NKPA 4th Division about equalled the foxhole strength of the three 24th Division regiments. The 24th Division held a line of about 40 miles of river front.[25] The advantage therefore lay with the NKPA 4th Division since they had the opportunity of selecting the points of contact and massing their forces against the 24th Division strong points or infiltrating and flanking the U.S. units. The result was that at points of decision, the NKPA frequently had regimental size units attacking company size U.S. positions. Once the NKPA 4th Division crossed the Naktong in strength and consolidated its position, the advantage turned to the U.S. forces since the bulge could be isolated and U.S. forces massed against it.

In the initial stages of the battle there were no supporting units for either side. As the situation of the 24th Division deteriorated, it received a succession of reinforcements and priority for Eighth Army artillery and fighter/interceptor sorties.

For the NKPA, there were no additional units to influence the fight. By the time the NKPA 4th Division had reached the Naktong, it had run out of steam. The efforts of the division in creating the Naktong Bulge exhausted them completely. By 15 August 1950, the division was low on food. The 18th Infantry Regiment had received its last resupply of ammunition on 14 August 1950. Desertions among replacements was reaching 40 percent.[26] The NKPA's ability to influence the action was almost nil once the 24th Division had succeeded in stopping the 4th Division. On the other hand, Eighth Army was gaining strength and capability. As the 24th Division was able to hang on and draw out the attack of the 4th Division, more and more assets poured into Korea with which the Eighth Army commander could influence the action in the 24th Division's sector. The first two major ground elements to join the fight were the 9th Infantry Regiment on 7 August 1950 [27] and the 27th



Infantry Regiment on 12 August 1950.[28] On the 15th of August the Eighth Army commander General Walker attached the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade to the 24th Division for the crucial and conclusive battles for Ohong-ni and Cloverleaf Bridges. Additionally, the Marines brought with them additional close support assets available from Marine Corsair Squadrons stationed off the Korean coast aboard the aircraft carriers Budoeng Strait and Sicily.[29]

The force committed by the NKPA was limited essentially to the 4th Division. The Eighth Army forces consisted of the 24th Division with assigned units, less the 17th ROK Infantry Regiment which was pulled out on 6-7 August 1950 just as the battle was getting started. This unit was replaced on 7 August with the attachment of the 9th Infantry Regiment.[30]

The NKPA 4th Division did not receive any known unit replacements. U.S. air interdiction during daylight hours made resupply of the unit all but impossible. Replacements reaching the division frequently did not even have weapons.

The units reinforcing the 24th Division were fed in steadily beginning about 7 August with the 9th Infantry Regiment. This was followed on 11 August by the 2d Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment; the rest of the 27th Infantry Regiment on the 12th of August and the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade on 15 August, 1950. The 9th Infantry was a full-up regiment with all its authorized men and equipment and was supported by the 15th Field Artillery Battalion of 105mm howitzers.[31] The 1st Provisional Marine Brigade was composed of the 5th Marines plus a brigade headquarters group. The three battalions of the brigade had only two rifle companies each and a heavy weapons company and a strength of 4,725 men.[32]

### 3. Technology

The Korean War was principally fought with World War II surplus equipment by both sides. Two major technological advances in the field of aviation were the use of helicopters and jet aircraft, however neither played a role in the 24th Divisions battle at the Naktong Bulge.

Only during the early months of the Korean conflict did the enemy employ armor to any great extent. At the outbreak of hostilities, the North Korean People's Army had one armored component, the 105th Armored Division. This division had approximately 123 T34 medium tanks in its three regiments, 22 T34s and 11 T70s in a training regiment, making a total of 156 tanks. During the month of August, this Armored Division was nearly destroyed as a potential fighting force by the accuracy of the United States air power and infantry ground units. The superiority of U. S. air strength forced North Korean tanks to move at night and use secondary roads and trails. Because of this, the tanks became road bound and herded close together, moving one at a time. Enemy tanks moved without lights at night.

The enemy adopted many camouflage measures in order to deceive United States airmen. When U. S. aircraft approached, the enemy tank crews lit smudge pots or oily rags near the tanks to give the impression that the tanks were burning. Other tanks used United States markings. Still others crashed into houses or used thatched roofs as concealment. Others parked beside other destroyed tanks or trucks.

The weight of U. N. air power had had a telling effect upon the North Koreans. Their Russian-made tanks were less and less in evidence and many of the communist veterans who had swept through South Korea in July were dead. Often their places

were filled by untrained recruits.

The North Korean Yak fighter aircraft which were prevalent at the beginning of the war rarely ventured near the Naktong River area. The U. S. had obtained air superiority. In short, the North Korean army had become primarily a rifle and machine gun army, while the American force counted mostly on mortars, artillery, tanks, bazookas, and bombs.

North Korean artillery was initially superior to that of any other oriental nation; however, it was rendered impotent by United Nations air power and its over-extended supply lines.[33]

The M-26 Pershing tanks, with their 90-mm guns were more than a match for the remaining North Korean T-34 tanks.

The North Koreans used a combination of weapons. Those weapons consisted of a mix of U.S., Chinese, and Japanese weapons, and first generation Russian weapons provided by the Soviets. Individual weapons were in short supply; some men were sent into combat weaponless. Those men were expected to use captured U. S. weapons or weapons taken from their fallen comrades. While the small arms they did possess were in most cases comparable to those possessed by the U. S. forces, their lack of heavier weapons (tank, artillery, air defense artillery, and aircraft) common to the modern armies of that period was a significant disadvantage.

The primary means of transportation in the North Korean Army was animals or human beings. The trucks that were available were of different sizes and many still bore the markings of American units which lost equipment during the July withdrawal.

North Korean engineers were industrious, but had limited heavy equipment. The North Koreans used manual labor to build many underwater bridges across the Naktong during August, 1950. They consisted of sandbags, logs, and rocks to a point about one foot below the surface of the water. In effect, they constituted shallow fords. In muddy water they were hard to detect from the air.[34]

During the early part of the conflict, North Korean forces established radio relay stations forward of the advance message center on the flank from which an envelopment of United Nations forces was to take place. The enemy found radios unreliable in Korea due to terrain and effective U.N. artillery fire. American and Chinese Communist Force telephones were used by the enemy.

The primary means of communications at battalion and below was messenger or other visual or auditory signaling devices.

Lack of communications hampered Communist Forces in battle, especially at night. Because of poor communications, the enemy had difficulty in either controlling his units or halting an attack. For this reason, the enemy had to continue his attack even under adverse conditions.

Obviously, this lack of communications made timely analysis of the situation and quick response impossible. This capability, possessed by the U. S. forces was crucial to their success.

Although the Eighth Army commander still found it necessary to shift troops

constantly to plug holes in his perimeter, inflict casualties, and gain time, he had one important advantage: shorter interior lines of communication. Pusan itself had swiftly expanded into a sprawling supply base packed with vehicles, clothing, rations, tents, ammunition, and fuel. In addition, an infinite variety of supplies, weapons, and equipment was stacked at numerous concentration points within a fifteen mile radius of the port. By mid-August almost any needed item of supply could be procured on short notice from the logistical command at Pusan.[35]

The North Koreans, meanwhile, were experiencing great difficulty in moving materiel to the combat zone because of the constant daylight bombing of strategic targets and visible routes of communication. Night intruder missions by B-26's also slowed the movement of troops and supplies.

U. S. air power managed to eliminate the North Korean Air Force early in the battle, destroyed much of the NKPA armor, and transported critically needed men and supplies to spots of greatest danger. Meanwhile the Navy controlled the entire Korean sea coast and prevented even small hostile forces from side-slipping along the coast. The Air Force provided complete mastery of the skies needed by the ground forces to retain the flimsy toehold in Korea and hang on [36]

#### 4. Logistical and Administrative Systems

##### a. Logistical aspects

Logistically, the North Koreans were prepared for war. They controlled over 75 percent of the total industrial output of the two Koreas and were producing massive amounts of materiel for war. In addition, they possessed large stockpiles of weapons and equipment left in Manchuria by the Japanese. They also had large quantities of American weapons captured by the Chinese Communists from the Chinese Nationalists. The Soviet Union provided additional equipment to the North Koreans. They moved their equipment from the Soviet Union by train to Manchuria where it had to be transshipped to trains of different gauges before arriving in North Korea. Although denied by the Soviets at the time, they provided most of the equipment used in the initial drive to the Naktong. Captured trucks and jeeps were made in Russia and showed between 50 to 200 miles on their odometers.

At the start of the drive to Pusan in 1950, North Korea had about 100 Russian built planes and 300 Russian T-34 tanks. Their Air Force was quickly knocked from the skies and was unable to provide any support what so ever during the U.N. defense of the Pusan Perimeter. After one month of fighting and on the eve of the battle of Naktong, a conservative estimate placed the enemy tank losses at 204 with about half of those losses reported by fighter planes. Some of those tanks were replaced but the enemy armor threat had dropped off considerably. This was because their tanks were being destroyed faster than they could be pressed into service and also because of the shortage of gasoline supplies--brought about by the incessant air attacks against their extended line of communication. Massive strategic bombing by B-29 Superfortresses against North Korean industrial targets seriously hampered their ability to produce and supply the war. Daily strategic bombing targets were scratched from Air Force lists in July. Munitions and chemical plants, arsenal, oil refineries and railway yards were demolished. To prevent resupply from the sea, our bombers destroyed their port facilities and shipping activities.

Somehow, rail supplies continued to reach the front, carrying ammunition and motor fuels. Artillery pieces were being chewed up but mortars, small arms and machine guns reached the Naktong without the support of motor transport. These

military supplies arrived at the expense of other supplies. Artillery and mortars were at less than one-third their authorized strength. The ammunition now reaching the troops was old Russian vintage, corroded and producing misfires and duds. By Mid-August, 90 percent of captured material was of U.S. origin, lost to the enemy in previous encounters.

In June 1950, the U.S. Army was undergoing further cuts in manpower and accompanying logistical support facilities. Depots, hospitals and camps were closing and the many maintenance and procurement programs were curtailed. This had been going on ever since V-E Day and steadily continued throughout the latter part of the 1940's. When the first U.S. troops arrived in South Korea from Japan, they were neither trained nor equipped for sustained combat. After the first week of fighting, the 24th Division had lost about 30 percent of its personnel. In combat for little over a month, the division had lost practically all its equipment. These material shortages were a serious concern to everyone. By 23 July, the division G-4 estimated that 60-70 percent of equipment required replacement. Regiments of the division deployed to Korea with less than 60 percent of their authorized radios. Of those radios available, most were inoperable, the batteries were too old. Telephone wire was scarce also. The shifting of units and wide frontages in the 24th Division necessitated large amounts of wire--65 miles of cable and 3,400 miles of commo wire were distributed by the G-4. Finding itself as the keystone of a defensive perimeter without adequate communication capability to tie in with adjacent units presented serious problems for the 24th. Some of the battalions had only one recoilless rifle apiece. There were no spare machine gun barrels and many of the M-1 rifles were unserviceable. 60mm mortar tubes were worn out. Necessary cleaning supplies were not available, further exacerbating weapon shortages. The Division deployed with only 50 percent of its authorized vehicles and possessed just a single company of light tanks, its only armor. There were no tanks in production when the war began and no new models reached Korea during the fighting. In August the first of the Shermans and Pershings were employed. But by the time the Naktong was drawing to a close, the threat of enemy armor had all but vanished. Ammunition was another problem. When the war began, the U.S. stockpile of ammo (WW II vintage) was unbalanced. The supply of 105mm howitzer rounds was adequate for three years of combat in Korea using WW II days of supply rates. This stockpile was depleted quickly as commanders adopted new tactics requiring tremendous amounts of artillery support. There were shortages of flares and illumination rounds, so necessary because of North Korean night attacks. Mortar rounds of all calibers, grenades and artillery ammunition were not available. These shortages, coupled with poor training accounted for the terrible defeats suffered by the 24th Division during its first month in combat. Eighth Army found itself in a perimeter defense because it could not logistically support a general offensive nor were there enough troops to carry it out. The division artillery had only 17 105mm and 12 155mm howitzers available to cover 43 miles of front. But as the war continued, supplies began arriving in Korea and the situation quickly improved.

Korea, like most wars that preceded it, used as reserves, those supplies and equipment produced in a previous war. There is always going to be a time lag before industrial mobilization can catch up to materiel requirements. During the Korean War, full mobilization was never declared and shortages were a continuing problem. It took the involvement of the Chinese before the U.S. ever increased its armaments program, expanded procurement and broadened the industrial base for possible rapid expansion. Without the equipment left over from the Second World War, combat operations in Korea could not have been possible or at least supported for long. Supply procedures also were carried over and allowed the U.S. to fill requisitions and build up shipments quickly. To provide immediate relief, the U.S. drew from

World War II supplies stored throughout the Pacific. Most automotive vehicles were of World War II vintage. They were collected from Pacific outposts, sent to Japanese ordnance repair shops for rebuild then shipped to Korea. During the first months, the Japanese turned out thousands of small arms, artillery pieces, combat and general purpose vehicles. The program probably saved the tactical situation in Korea. Field rations were largely World War II K Rations. There were no C Rations in theater and only a small reserve elsewhere. The World War II bazooka was replaced by a larger, more powerful bazooka. Airlifted to Korea in July 1950, they proved useful in destroying enemy armor.

Once the pipeline began to flow in July, ammunition shortages were attributed to local distribution problems, not general availability in Korea. At no time did theater stocks ever run dry. High ammo expenditures put a tremendous burden on the meager transportation assets available and deliveries were seldom on schedule. It was going to take practically all the reserve stocks of World War II equipment to sustain the forces in meeting the first attack and deny to the enemy a quick victory.

Before and during the battle of Naktong, there were many days when ammunition shortages posed serious problems to the U.S. Forces. On 27-28 July, there were urgent requests for 3.5 inch rocket launchers with ammo, rifles, mortars and ammo. In August, Eighth Army imposed rationing of 4.2 inch, 81mm and 105mm howitzer ammunition. All types of pyrotechnics were in critical demand. Trip flares were unavailable, 60mm illumination rounds were defective, failing to detonate on many occasions. Immediate air resupply of critical items was begun. One hundred tons of high priority air cargo included 3.5 inch rockets for the Air Force, 4.2 inch mortar rounds and quantities of the new recoilless rifle. Initially, the airfields in the South served the resupply effort well. But by mid August, the heavily laden C-54's began to exact a toll on the thin concrete crust of the runways and aprons which were built to withstand light Japanese planes in World War II. By now, ships were carrying practically all the required supplies to Korea.

It was extremely fortunate for the United Nations forces that South Korea's finest port, Pusan, was at the tip of the peninsula. Pusan remained the primary depot area and port throughout the war. Capture or destruction of the port and facilities would have spelled complete disaster for the allied effort. Pusan could handle 45,000 measurement tons daily but seldom exceeded 14,000 because of the unavailability of skilled labor and terminal transfer assets. This constraint was evident from the beginning and lasted throughout the war. Twenty-four ships could be birthed at its four piers; LSTs used the beaches. During the latter part of July, 230 ships arrived at Pusan carrying 42,500 troops, 9,500 vehicles and over 89,000 tons of supplies. Pusan was only 110 miles from the nearest Japanese port. Japan had rebounded from World War II and by 1950 was again the leading industrial power in the Far East. So long as the U.S. controlled the air and sea, logistics support from Japan and the U.S. would not be a barrier. A Red Ball Express was established in Japan using rail and water transport to move supplies from Yokohama to Sasebo then to Korea. Begun 23 July, it averaged just over 60 hours from start to finish with capacity increasing from 300 tons on 5 August to 950 tons on 25 August. Clearly, this resupply effort played a key role during that critical month of August, 1950.

As mentioned, Pusan suffered from a shortage of skilled labor. But congested pier space presented additional problems. There was a tremendous demand for motor transport to move the cargo off the docks to forward supply areas. The only wheeled transport available consisted of 2 1/2 ton trucks. They were immediately called

forward to support the fighting forces. This left the port operators with no choice but to form indigenous truck companies. A nucleus of American officers and mechanics were needed but hard to find. The absence of adequate tractor trailer vehicles imposed significant constraints on the operation--2 1/2 ton trucks were just not big enough to clear the cargo quickly. Many subsidiary depots and dumps had been set up within a 15 mile radius of the port to allow for port clearance although still remaining safe from enemy attack. Pusan was also the southern most terminal for a good north-south railroad system. By now, the North Korean's controlled the northern two thirds of the system. Additional locomotives were needed immediately to keep the Korean railroad operating. A tremendous amount of rolling stock had been lost when Seoul fell in June. Many engines were in Japan undergoing repair but before long, they were returned for service. Over 350 trains departed Pusan in July but by now, they did not have to travel far to reach the forward supply points. The Division G-4 reported that many trains were lost for days on a siding because of poor supervision. There was a greater effort made to control train movements from the port to the destination.

At the beginning of the war, the U.S. had aircraft capable of airdrop operations but the actual delivery of equipment had not caught up technologically with the aircraft. The U.S. continued to use World War II equipment and systems. Tactical airlift did not really play a major role until after our forces broke out from the Pusan perimeter and began extending their lines of communication northward. There were however, three successful air drops during the battle, necessitated by rugged terrain and not enemy action or encirclement. For the time being, transportation resources were barely adequate to keep the defenders around the Naktong well supplied.

With Pusan being the only operational port through which supplies and ammunition could enter the country, the factor of getting available quantities into the troop's hands was not a question of ammo on hand but the ability to get it there. Ammunition had to compete with rations, replacements, reinforcements, POL and the like. There was not a problem of misuse or excessive expenditures of artillery ammunition because for now, it just was not there to squander. Because of its high density, ammunition accounted for over half the supplies that reached the division area. The emphasis of supply was front to rear owing to organizational problems of the Pusan Logistics Command. The division sent representatives to Pusan to help in locating supplies and supervise the loading and movement to the division.

Ration breakdown was handled differently than from previous wars. Instead of shipping rations in bulk to the Army rear where it would be broken down in division lots, the logistics base in Pusan broke rations down in division and regimental lots and shipped them directly to the units. The uncertain lines of communication, poor roads, shortage of transportation and service support troops necessitated this solution for the first few months.

As there were not great quantities of motor transportation in theater in July and August, motor fuels and lubricants were not scarce. Later though as the LOC was extended northward, POL demands increased significantly but the supplies were adequate.

Maintenance problems in Korea surfaced immediately. The vehicles were old, and the roads were over rugged and mountainous terrain. In spite of the terrain, old vehicles, and bad major roads, the problem appears to have been the result of a shortage of well trained men to do organizational and direct support maintenance. A shortage of tank repairmen was felt immediately. Spare parts for specialized

engincer equipment was a continuing problem.

#### b. Personnel Aspects

The Korean War saw a reduction in mortality among men wounded in action because of reduced lapsed time before they were provided surgical treatment. This was not yet true in the early months of the war. In July and August, helicopters were not yet common nor had the first mobile army surgical hospital been established in country. The first major hospital unit arrived in Korea from Japan about one month before the battle of Naktong. With a rated capacity of 150 patients, it reached its limit the first night, increasing to 800 by the third night. The immediate solution was to evacuate all sick and wounded to Japan by any means available. This situation did not improve until September when hospital ships arrived from the States. The real problem though, was in the loss of needed manpower at a most critical time. Many might have returned to their units far sooner if they could have been cared for in Korea. Although wounded did not have to be transported far to the rear for treatment, there was a shortage of adequate transportation to do the job. There were no rail cars available for the wounded because they were all destroyed in Seoul.

Before the Battle of the Naktong, the U.S. 24th Division had taken a terrible beating. They were rushed into the fight as a desperate measure. Understrength, poorly trained and lacking equipment, they met with expected failure. The Division suffered not only from the hands of a powerful attacker but from heat exhaustion and fatigue. By 8 August, the regimental strengths were in poor shape. Combat effectiveness was near 40% because of personnel and equipment shortages. Fatigue and low morale reduced that percentage even further. At times, the situation became desperate to the point where headquarters' clerks, bakers and military police were pressed into service on the front lines. The 19th Infantry Regiment was filled with raw recruits. They had planned on six weeks of training in country, instead they had four days. Weapons were not zeroed, mortars not test fired and some weapons were still in cosmoline. Personnel reinforcements began arriving in strength the first week of August and were immediately rushed into the line. Their arrival materially reduced the great disparity that had previously existed between the enemy's strength and the division's. Throughout the battle, personnel strengths remained low. By August 15, it was decided that U.S. strength was so weakened that there would be no more attacks. The 24th Division was to defend in place. The 1st Provisional Marine Brigade was attached to the division to improve the situation. From 17-19 August, the 24th Division and elements of the Marine brigade attacked and finally routed the remnants of the North Korean 4th Infantry Division. It was only now that the future of Pusan looked secure. The increasing arrivals of reinforcements and supplies insured that Pusan would be held and allowed a build-up for later counteroffensives that would push North to the Chinese border. With increased men and materiel, the situation would never again be as desperate as it had been during the heaviest days of fighting at the Naktong bulge.

The North Koreans had been under constant attack by United Nations Air Forces during daylight hours. Rail lines and bridges were taken out. The enemy resorted to disguising their soldiers as displaced refugees who were able to infiltrate U.S. positions and move supplies, weapons and ammunition in peasant owned carts. Resorting to human and animal transport to keep their men fed and armed, their supplies were running low. Many North Korean soldiers captured at the Naktong were half starved. They were unable to forage as planned and their columns of supplies were torn up by the Air Forces. They were forced to move only at night, concealing themselves in wooded areas during the day. They were able to find only small

amounts of rice from the local farmers who had hidden most of their stocks from the advancing enemy. Throughout the battle, it was evident that the North Koreans continued to show great ingenuity in supplying their troops. Despite constant hammering, ammunition, gasoline and other important supplies were still finding their way to the front in enough quantity to sustain the battle. There was no new clothing and rations continued to grow scarce.

Replacements by this time had little training and their absorption lowered the efficiency of the combat units. As the battle continued, replacements consisted of conscripts from both North Korea and South Korea. These new, untrained men were of doubtful value on the front line but were useful as ammunition bearers and labor troops to move supplies, forage for food and repair roads and bridges. By mid August as the battle ground on, the North Korean 4th Division was being bled white. One third of its strength consisted of South Korean inductees but surprisingly, morale was still reported as firm. That could only apply to the leadership because according to prisoners taken at the time, desertion among replacements was around 40 percent. The wounded received little attention and many are reported to have died out of neglect.

#### 5. Command, Control, and Communications Systems

The NKPA 4th Division started the war in a high state of readiness, training and strength. By the time of the Naktong River battles the division had been worn down to almost 60 percent. Many of its combat veterans had become casualties and the division's combat effectiveness greatly diminished. During the crucial battles of 15-17 August the resupply situation of men, food and materials had almost become nonexistent. Replacements that were received frequently deserted and about half arrived without weapons.

The primary resources available to the NKPA was initiative and a still strong attack spirit.[37] Until the very end of the battle, the NKPA 4th Division was able to infiltrate U.S. positions and create chaos and consternation in the U.S. rear areas. The willingness of NKPA units to use night for movement, travel cross country, and fight isolated made the best possible use of the limited manpower available.

By contrast the U.S. forces had growing manpower assets that were frequently spread piecemeal in uncoordinated and costly frontal attacks. U.S. superiority in air support was frequently minimized by early morning cloud cover and failure by commanders (especially U.S. Army commanders) to appreciate the benefits of close air support. The 5th Marines having the support of Marine Corsairs Squadrons were able to accomplish in about two days of fighting what the 24th Division by itself could not do in two weeks, that of pushing the NKPA 4th Division back across the Naktong.

The relationships between the commanders and staffs of the NKPA units is unknown. Based on the extraordinary ability of the NKPA units to push forces much larger than themselves to the very edge of defeat, it may be assumed that the commanders and staffs worked well. In the case of the 24th Division, the staff and commanders failed to gain control of the battle until the enemy had been defeated in detail by overwhelming forces, and the break down of the NKPA resupply effort. The staffs in their peacetime duties did not conduct the amount and type of training that would make efficient combat staff operations. Additionally the 24th Division was understrength by about one-third when it was ordered to Korea. During the deployment it was brought up to strength by stripping other organizations of personnel and sending them to the division as fillers. The pace of battle from the



time of commitment until the battles of the Naktong Bulge did not permit commanders and staff the time or luxury of training on staff operations and control. The result was that battles were generally fought beyond control and influence of even company commanders. The commanders of higher level units from battalion to division were frequently in the dark about what was going on and surprised to find enemy troops in areas considered secure.

Rarely was there time to prepare detailed operations plans. The battle was extremely fluid due to the ~~long~~<sup>large</sup> division front and the enemy tactics of infiltration. Normally, orders were given on the spot, verbally. Because of the lack of communications equipment and the inexperience of the commanders, little coordination was done to insure mutually supporting attacks. Even on those occasions when time permitted coordination and it was so ordered, problems of terrain, enemy disposition or weather interfered and frustrated efforts of coordinated operations. Again, even at the company level, coordination between platoons was difficult. For example, a simple frontal attack on the morning of 15 August 1950 by Company A, 1st Battalion, 34th Infantry Regiment to seize the south end of Obong-ni Ridge floundered when the 3d platoon following immediately behind the attacking platoons took a wrong turn and got lost. The attacking platoons seized the objective but without the support of the missing platoon could not secure the ridge and was forced to withdraw.[38]

Units piecemealed into the Naktong Bulge battle were attached to the 24th Division. These included up to brigade sized units such as the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade. As the battle first started, the division commander tried to control all the units through the normal chain of command relationship. However, the piecemealing of units into the battle and the requirement for the division commander to consider the threat to the entire division zone eventually resulted in a makeshift command arrangement that cut down the span of control considerably and placed all units involved in the Naktong Bulge under a single commander. On the evening of 10 August 1950, the division commander, MG Church, placed the commander of the 9th Infantry Regiment, Col John G. Hill in command of all troops in the Naktong Bulge.[39] These forces consisted of the 9th Regimental Combat Team (less the 3d battalion); the 34th and 19th Infantry; and the 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment; together with supporting division artillery and other attached units.[40]

The units of the 24th Division fought as pure infantry. There were no mechanized fighting vehicles and few tanks for cross organization. Even when tanks were available they were used in a supporting role rather than in a combined arms role. Generally, they were used to defeat enemy tanks and then withdrawn instead of assisting in a coordinated infantry/armor combined arms attack. To some degree, this was due to the nature of the terrain and location of the enemy units. The terrain generally restructured the tanks to the roads whereas the enemy tended to avoid roads and built up areas.

The missions originally given to the 24th Division were a little short of fantastic. It was ordered to hold the line of the lower Naktong River for a distance of 25 air miles, or 40 miles of river front.[41] In World War II, a division normally was expected to hold a front of about five miles. Once the battle of the Naktong Bulge got underway, missions given to the units were standard infantry missions to close with and destroy the enemy. The problem with most of these missions was that the attack force was too small, it wasn't properly supported, the enemy situation was unknown, or coordinated attacks weren't coordinated. At one point the situation required the 24th Division to assemble from among eight different units about 135 men including clerks, bakers, MP's and reconnaissance company troops to block an enemy penetration near Simgong-ni on the

Regarding proper liaison between units, the rule of thumb was that liaison was rarely accomplished. When it was, it was ineffective. For example, on 16 August 1950, MG Church had planned a coordinated attack against the Cloverleaf Ridge complex with the 9th Regiment and Obong-ni Ridge with the 5th Marines. The marine commander, however, wanted to conduct his attack alone. The result was that the marines ran into the total force of the enemy instead of just the Obong-ni Ridge occupants and, hence, his attack failed.[43]

The 24th Division suffered from the start by a lack of enough communications equipment. It came to Korea with critical shortages of telephone wire, radio batteries, and maps. The result was that commanders above the platoon level had difficulty controlling subordinate units and gaining timely, accurate information about enemy activities from which decisions could be made.

The primary means of battlefield communications relied on the tactical radio. The alternate means generally consisted of runners and messengers. In some instances the division commander had access to aviation transportation to observe the battle and visit subordinate headquarters.

The enemy's principle tactic was to infiltrate and isolate units; to cut off command and control of individual units so that they could be bypassed or destroyed piecemeal. The situation was frequently so confused and fluid that at one point it was described as the participants having each other surrounded and cut off.

Security of operations and transmission was poor. How much it cost the U.S. units is unknown. But an example of the breach in security was pointed out after the battle of Obong-ni Ridge was over. Included in the captured enemy equipment was a U.S. Army radio, SCR-300 in good operating condition and set to the frequency of the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines. Most probably, the enemy had been listening to conversations between the battalion's two companies and had known their exact locations and dispositions.[44]

## 6. Intelligence

United States intelligence was caught by surprise in June; they had not picked up any indications of a North Korean invasion. The intelligence community had been caught "flat-footed"; and there was only minimal improvement from that time until the U.S. defensive retrograde behind the Nakdong River, which took place in August. The scarcity of vital aerial photoreconnaissance lay at the root of the intelligence failure. The U.S. lacked not only the hardware, but the experience as well--the years of human expertise gained in truly remarkable intelligence gathering and assessment feats during the war years. The finely-honed minds that had, by 1945, mastered the art were gone, or gone soft from inactivity. There was a general shortage of trained photo interpreters in the theater. Initially not more than 50 percent of intelligence photography requests were being fulfilled and excessive delay in receipt rendered them of doubtful value. Aerial photography by liaison plane using a K-20 camera took from 24-72 hours to process. Time lag with aerial photos caused it not to be used much.

The majority of observations of enemy activity north of the Nakdong River was accomplished through observation posts and light plane overflights. The line of the Nakdong as organized by the American forces was a series of strongpoints on the

highest hills, affording views of both the river and the natural avenues of travel from it. During the day, these points were hardly more than observation posts. At night they became listening posts and tight little defense perimeters. Some of the posts were manned only in the daytime. Others were held by no more than half a squad of men. No one expected these soldiers to fight in position; they were a form of intelligence screen, their duty being to observe and report.[45]

Intelligence collection plans were not being maintained by U.S. division intelligence sections. During the early phases of the operations, division intelligence officers attempted to maintain written collection plans, however, they felt that the preparation of collection plans unnecessarily overburdened the intelligence section, and that the results to be gained by such preparation did not warrant the effort expended. There were relatively few requests for the collection of specific information issued by intelligence sections. The normal method of collection of information was through the announcement of essential elements of information (EEI), which were numerous and were rarely supplemented by specific requests for information. Although frequent reference was made in periodic intelligence reports to indications of their adoption by the enemy of certain courses of action, there was no complete analysis of basic EEI into indications maintained in the army intelligence sections. The general absence of previous intelligence experience among assigned intelligence officers and the shortage of qualified intelligence specialists apparently were major factors contributing to the lack of emphasis placed on preparation and execution of a coordinated collection plan. U.S. battalion and regimental intelligence officers had little or no intelligence training. They developed their skills by on-the-job-training.

Each U.S. division had its own allotment of interrogators augmented by Department of the Army Civilians, ROK Army personnel, and indigenous Koreans. Some of the U.S. interrogators were graduates of the Army Language School, but had no interrogator training. The most effective method of interrogating North Korean POW's consisted of kind, sympathetic treatment and reassurance that they would not be harmed. Most deserters were taken during enemy offensive actions. They would attack with the main force and stay behind as the attacking force withdrew. NKPA soldiers who surrendered were very cooperative, however, they feared reprisals on their families and were apprehensive of treatment by U.S. forces.

General Walker's primary intelligence information was obtained by POW interrogation, aerial observation, forward artillery observation, and front-line infantry units.[46] Artillery communications nets were often used to transmit intelligence information.[47] Increased patrol activity was stepped up with many patrols having the primary mission of capturing prisoners. Small probing attacks were conducted to determine the areas in which the enemy was most sensitive. When the direction of the anticipated enemy attack was determined, friendly forces were shifted to meet the offensive.

By 4 August, the North Korean 4th Division was studying the American dispositions and defenses opposite it on the east side of the Nakdong River. The intelligence collection capability of the North Korean Army at the strategic level was ineffective. At the tactical level, intelligence was obtained primarily through observation posts, reconnaissance, agents and POW's.

Reconnaissance units of the North Korean People's Army were organized within the structure of every echelon from corps to company level. The North Korean People's Army corps and divisions had a reconnaissance battalion; the regiment had a

reconnaissance company; the battalion, a platoon; and the company a reconnaissance squad. All such units were attached to the headquarters of each echelon and were employed by their respective commander.

Three common types of missions were performed by North Korean reconnaissance units. First, a political reconnaissance was made to determine the trends, political thoughts, and the caste system of villagers in the area of proposed attack. The local Korean Labor Party and its sympathizers were contacted, and the political tendencies of the area were analyzed. The members of reconnaissance units were usually Korean Labor Party members or known Communist sympathizers of proletarian origin. The members were thoroughly oriented before each mission of this type with the Communist doctrine so that they were capable of indoctrinating local citizens and gaining their support. Political officers led political reconnaissance groups.

A second type of reconnaissance. The primary concern was to capture United Nations classified documents and to collect order of battle information. This mission was accomplished by infiltrating United Nations positions, using local Korean Labor Party members and sympathizers as scouts. In combat, local citizens, classified as low level espionage or tactical information agents, were utilized because of their knowledge of the surrounding terrain and language. Political and military officers led the intelligence reconnaissance missions.

The third type of mission was armed reconnaissance to determine hostile firing positions. Weapons were fired indiscriminately in the direction of suspected U.N. positions, and return fire was carefully noted. This type of mission was led by military officers.[48]

North Korean Forces utilized observation posts. Each was selected with the enemy's operation and strength in mind and was well-camouflaged. Each observation post consisted of three members, two reconnaissance personnel and one staff officer. The method of observation was determined by high ranking officers only, and the mission of the observation posts was to obtain intelligence pertaining to both communication and the mission of United Nations Forces. When available, compasses, telescopes, and Very pistols were used in making observations.

North Korean People's Army placed more weight on information gathered from civilians and reconnaissance patrols than on the results of their probing attacks. Another important source of information to the enemy was captured United Nations personnel. The enemy selected the time of arrival of United Nations forces at a new place as the opportune time to capture prisoners. United Nations personnel away from their unit, stragglers, and wire men were desired prisoners. Patrols were instructed to cut telephone wires and wait to capture the linemen.

North Korean People's Army, together with enemy guerrilla forces, utilized large numbers of poorly trained agents to gather information of military value. High-level intelligence was conducted by training companies established by the North Korean Political Security Bureau and by North Korean field grade officers, especially trained for intelligence and espionage work. These agents normally confined their activities to the supervision of subordinate information nets.[49]

Missions given to agents varied with the sector to which assigned. On the front lines, the agents attempted to determine the location of U.N. main line of resistance; the strength, composition, and disposition of various units; the number and types of weapons; the conditions of roads; the objective and movement of U.N.

patrols; and the location of hidden foodstuffs. In forward areas, the agent also determined the number and location of troops. In addition, he noticed the location of U.N. artillery, armor, and command posts; the location of various refugee check-points. In rear areas, in addition to noting the location and number of U.N. troops, agents located National Police strong points and determined their strength. They took the names and addresses of civilians friendly toward the North Korean cause and those who collaborated with U.N. Forces. They also noted the attitude and feeling of refugees and the South Korean people. Enemy agents were recruited from both sexes and all ages. Young boys were very active in collecting information for the NKPA and partisan bands. Usually, agents transmitted their information orally, or concealed information in the seams of their clothes or shoes or in the private parts of their bodies. In rear areas, information gained by enemy agents was sent to North Korea by radio.[50]

## 7. Doctrine and Training

### a. Doctrine

Major Robert Doughty, U.S. Army, in a Leavenworth Paper titled: The Evolution of U.S. Army Tactical Doctrine, 1946-76, states, "that in the years between World War II and Korea, the Army carefully considered its tactical doctrine, but its methods remained essentially those of World War II." Organizationally, a tank company was added to each infantry regiment and a tank battalion to each division. This was based upon studies that concluded the best anti-tank weapon was another tank. While the bazooka and recoilless rifle had been developed as anti-tank weapons they were not designated as a primary anti-tank weapon of infantry units. Instead, these units would use them as supplements to the tank which remained the primary anti-tank weapon. Major Doughty goes on to state that "while the infantry division was suited for a wide range of responsibilities, it could engage, according to doctrine, in 'decisive operations' in many situations only if it were supported by other arms." The doctrine for ground operations emphasized offensive warfare and an aggressive spirit, and discussed several types of operations such as the penetration, envelopment, and breakthrough. However, for defensive ground combat only one type of defense was discussed; that generally associated with what is called an area defense. The doctrine visualized defense in depth, large reserve forces and the selection and organization of successive fighting positions. The doctrine was based on a European scenario where the flanks were secure and the front clearly defined along a linear march. The fighting positions were to be held by infantry units which were expected to be bypassed by the enemy, then counterattacks from the large mobile reserve.

Unfortunately for the early arriving units in Korea such as the 24th Division, peacetime occupation duty had resulted in the skeletonization of most units. Infantry regiments were reduced from three to two battalions and artillery battalions from three to two batteries. The tank company equipment in each regiment and the division's tank battalion were either in storage or had been deleted from the organizations. The result was that there was no effective doctrine for U.S. Army commanders to follow. Doctrine did not address pure infantry employment; did not address how to operate with open flanks; did not address how to operate with two battalion regiments instead of three battalions per regiment and did not address how to perform retrograde operations from position of contact. As Major Doughty notes, the enemy took advantage of American weaknesses. The NKPA standard tactic was envelopment of U.S. units with open flanks. Infiltrating enemy units would occupy positions to the rear of U.S. units striking at command posts, support units, and artillery positions. A common scenario was for the NKPA to lead with pure tank

units which would slice through the U.S. positions virtually unmolested. (Remember, U.S. doctrine called for tanks in an anti-tank role and these had been left back in Japan.)

As the 24th Division pulled back into the Pusan Perimeter, the situation materially changed for U.S. commanders. The perimeter conformed generally to expected U.S. doctrinal employment. With secure flanks, linear frontage and mobile reserves. The 24th Division went into the traditional 2 regiments up on line with one back in reserve, however, this wasn't the actual defense in depth called for by doctrine as frontages for the units on line required a linear formation of strong units that were so spread out that they were not mutually supporting; often being just isolated observation posts. The battalions of the on-line regiments had frontages so vast that all companies were on line and defense in depth was provided only at the division level where the 19th Infantry Regiment was kept as division reserve.

The NKPA attacks into the Naktong Bulge conformed to their previously successful tactics of infiltration and envelopment. Now, with secure flanks the 24th Division was able to isolate and confine the area under attack and to mass men and material assets against it. The result was the decimation of the NKPA 4th Division.[51]

#### b. Training

Major Doughty quotes ~~the commander of the Eighth Army in Korea~~, General Matthew B. Ridgeway as stating that the Army was in a state of "shameful unreadiness", when the Korean war began. With the occupation forces of Japan skeltonized, heavy equipment put into storage because it was too heavy for Japanese roads, units reduced by one-third their authorized components, and a general shortage of support equipment such as commo wire and ammunition, little training was done. Everyone just assumed that before the occupation unit would have to be submitted to combat, that there would be plenty of warning time to permit bringing the divisions back up to their full authorization of men and equipment. Even personal physical training was neglected. Given this anticipation, and a lack of doctrinal guidance, little or no training was conducted on how to employ a two battalion regiment in combat. Similarly little thought was given to tactical operations with open flanks or anti-tank defense without the benefit of the principle anti-tank weapon. For this lack of initiative and foresight, the 24th Division paid dearly prior to its arrival at the Pusan Perimeter. By 8 August 1950, the combat effectiveness of the division was estimated to be about 40 percent.[52]

The NKPA 4th Division, by contrast, were battle hardened veterans of the 8th Chinese Route Army. They were well trained, possessed high esprit and were extremely confident and aggressive. By the time the NKPA 4th Division tried to cross the Naktong river many of the veterans had become casualties. Replacements pushed forward to the division were frequently untrained impressed South Korean civilians. Desertions ran about 40 percent among replacements received and about one half of them lacked weapons. When the NKPA 4th Division crossed the Naktong it was the bare shell of the tough outfit that had crossed the border into South Korea a month before. The strength was estimated at 7,000 men, down from an original authorization of 11,000. Based upon the fact that many of the 7,000 men were replacements and the division was experiencing a severe shortage of food and ammunition, it is estimated that the combat effectiveness of the 4th Division was comparable to that of the 24th Division. The advantage, however, was with the 24th Division since the combat effectiveness of the division would be materially altered,

favorably, with the attachment of fresh units such as the 9th Infantry Regiment and the 5th Marines. The 4th division existed at this stage, on the end of a long shoestring supply line without hope of significant reinforcement or replacement.

#### 8. Condition and Morale

During the long retreat, almost a division's worth of equipment had been destroyed or abandoned. Their morale weakened by constant retreats, their strength sapped by dysentery and the heat of the Korean summer, the men of the 24th Division badly needed time to rest and refit before again entering the fight. Although the constant retreats had been necessary, Walker feared that Eighth Army was losing whatever aggressiveness it once may have had. As early as 29 July, he had issued to officers of the 25th Division a ringing "stand or die" statement, which had been quickly circulated to other Eighth Army units as well. Walker announced there would be no Bataan. "There will be no more retreating! . . . We must fight to the end! . . . longer could withdraw when enemy pressure became oppressive. It had to stand and fight and hold or be driven out of Korea.[53] For most of these Americans this was an introduction to combat and the action was attended by severe losses in killed and wounded, as well as by a great many cases of heat prostration. The 24th Division, riddled with casualties, sore, weary, and dirty, looked around for respite--and found none. They were promptly shifted west and south to the Naktong River where they were to block enemy attempts to turn the southern flank. Concern for their flanks had contributed heavily to the tendency of American units to retreat more hastily than their commanders desired. Now, for the first time, the land area held by American and ROK forces had contracted enough so that a more or less continuous defensive line could be formed to shield the port of Pusan. With its flanks momentarily secured, and a few reserves in place, Eighth Army faced the continuing North Korean assaults with greater confidence than before.[54]

The U.N. defensive positions in Korea were held by tired but battle-worthy men whose usual rest was a few hours of troubled sleep in freshly dug foxholes. When attacking, the Americans first had to climb steep hills in roasting heat under withering enemy fire. When attacked, which was more often the case, the defenders were invariably outnumbered. Frequently they found themselves in combat with enemy troops which had temporarily exchanged the green uniform of the North Korean Army for the white shirt and baggy trousers of the civilian. The problem created by the passage of civilian hordes through combat areas troubled the Americans, who shrank from shooting at them but who knew that their appearance often implied that the enemy was lurking in the vicinity. Eventually, it was decided to shoot anyone who moved at night. Legitimate refugees were permitted to make their way south in the daylight hours when the chore of screening them was easier.[55]

The North Korean Army's superiority in numbers permitted him to maintain the initiative, despite his very high casualties, and to pour reinforcements into the depleted ranks of the assault units. To the U.N. commanders, the matter of replacements was of utmost concern. Even after the arrival of new troops from Hawaii and the United States in early August, the odds were still heavily against the defenders. The strength of American divisions fighting in Korea had been sharply reduced by sickness and casualties. Since ROK manpower appeared to be the most readily available source from which to draw personnel, plans were made to integrate recruited Koreans into U.S. Army units, under a program referred to as Korean Augmentation to the U.S. Army (KATUSA). During the month of August, each of the four U.S. divisions received an initial increment of 250 Koreans, forcibly and indiscriminately recruited from the streets of Pusan and Taegu, who had received no military training whatsoever. Some units were able to give these men a few weeks of



basic training; others had to commit them immediately.[56]

Initially pleased with the arrival of fresh troops to fill out their battered ranks, combat commanders soon were faced with difficulties which rapidly changed the supplementary soldiers from a welcome asset to an irksome burden. The language barrier, greatest of these difficulties, made maximum utilization of the Koreans impossible and control in combat virtually nonexistent. The ROK soldiers were unable to understand even the simplest command; sign language was relatively ineffective. American officers and NCO's were forced to expose themselves repeatedly during combat operations to get the Koreans moving in a U.N. attack or to prevent them from pulling back at the barest indication of an enemy attack.[57] The program was further beset with numerous other difficulties. Since the Koreans were not familiar with their weapons, U.S. soldiers could not depend on them; the lack of time available for training and simple cultural differences, in addition to the language barrier, caused Korean soldiers to be most uncertain and made them a hindrance rather than a help to the American units. Koreans lacked training and understanding of field sanitation and personal hygiene, thereby endangering the health of the command. Korean recruits were not immunized against diseases, causing EUSAK medical officers to be highly concerned over the possibility of epidemics. Their inability to perform skilled technical jobs, their disregard of supply discipline, their incompetence in independent positions such as outpost, listening post, or guard duty, were additional deficiencies.[58]

Morale of the combat soldier generally has been considered among the more significant factors affecting his ability to fight and hence has come in for much attention from those responsible for personnel matters. Rotation, proper assignment, rapid movement through the replacement system, and payment of men evacuated as casualties, all probably were equally as important as activities specifically intended to aid morale, such as awards and decorations, special service activities, and the rest and recuperation program.

When the Korean war began, all leaves were cancelled and remained frozen until November.

Soon after American troops were committed in Korea, the authority to make most awards and decorations, retained by The Department of the Army (DA) in peacetime, passed to Commander in Chief, Far East (CINCFE). DA retained the authority to make awards of the Medal of Honor, the Distinguished Service Medal, and decorations to foreign personnel. CINCFE delegated to major generals and above, who commanded organizations, the authority to make awards of the Silver Star and lesser decorations except the Legion of Merit, and to regimental and separate battalion commanders the authority to award the Combat Infantry Badge and the Medical Badge. Special permission also was granted to CINCFE to make awards to Navy and Air Force personnel under his command without reference to their service chiefs in Washington, which authority was further delegated to subordinate unified commanders. Most of the problems arising in connection with awards concerned interpretation and defining the limits to directives authorizing the various decorations.

Although they occasionally complained, the men in Korea generally received their pay as long as they stayed with their units. Technical difficulties encountered by finance officers, the most important of which was the new payroll form, which did not explain how the finance officer arrived at the amount the soldier was paid, and the fact that the administrative system in effect during the first year of the campaign was not flexible enough to get pay to men evacuated as casualties or otherwise separated from their units. For morale purposes, General MacArthur



requested, that legislation be enacted authorizing hazardous duty pay to ground force troops "habitually and continuously" in contact with the enemy; "action in Korea," he said, "provides a forceful reminder that the ground arms sustain the highest casualty rates. It is my firm conviction that the soldier meeting the enemy on the ground should be on equal footing, as regards hazardous duty pay, with the men who engage the foe from the air or under the sea." DA attempts to obtain such legislation were not successful.[59] Without hazardous duty allowances for ground troops, the only extra money given to soldiers in Korea during the campaign was exemption from payment of Federal income tax for each month or part of a month spent in Korea. This exemption applied equally to combat troops and to staff officers visiting from Japan, and was not therefore the aid to morale envisaged in plans for extra pay for particularly dangerous service.

The Army postal system in Korea was put on a combat basis promptly after the campaign began. On 12 July 1950, the President approved legislation which authorized free first class mailing privileges for soldiers in Korea. Complaints about delays and nondelivery of mail began almost at once, however. Difficulties did exist. Ground transportation from the airfields (usually at corps level) to the units in Korea was slow. Postal personnel and units were not available in the numbers needed; of two base post offices and twenty postal units requested at the outbreak of hostilities, DA was able to furnish only five Army Postal Units. Particularly early in the campaign, men transferred from one organization to another, units moved often and, of course, throughout the campaign men sometimes failed to notify correspondents of changes of address. The same difficulty attending administration of the records of evacuated casualties attended, to a lesser degree, delivery of mail to them. Similar difficulties attended delivery of Stars and Stripes, the distribution of which generally followed postal channels, and was therefore subject to the same conditions of slow and unpredictable truck and rail transportation in Korea.[60]

Although the situation did not look good for the American forces in the bulge, the harsh prospect nevertheless gave a distorted view unless one knew something of the picture on the "other side of the hill." Actually, the N.K. 4th Division was in desperate straits. Its food was in low supply. Ammunition resupply was difficult. Desertion among replacements, according to prisoners, reached about 40 percent. Half the replacements did not have weapons, and they were used for labor services in digging foxholes, carrying ammunition and foraging for food. The slightly wounded received but little medical attention, and were immediately put back into the front line. A large part of the severely wounded died from lack of medical care. Only the former Chinese Communist Forces fanatical squad and platoon leaders maintained high morale. North Korea still had a primitive supply system, no transport system, poor maintenance, and an appalling lack of doctors. There was only one doctor for each 33,000 troops. These mobile, hardy troops would be committed quickly, but not sustained. Hundreds of deaths from tetanus were caused by improper care of wounds. Hundreds more were incapacitated by typhus or ailments of malnutrition. The majority of POW's were infested with lice. North Korean prisoners said that about one-half of their wounded died from lack of medical care. The North Koreans, however, still showed no inclination to give up their plan to smash across the Nakdong River and capture Taegu. The average North Korean soldier, a peasant, was able to endure hardships undreamed of in Western armies. These troops were psychologically prepared by their leaders for a quick victory over U.S. troops.

No one doubted that the North Koreans intended to force a crossing of the Nakdong without delay. Time was against them. Every passing week brought closer the prospect of more American reinforcements--troops, tanks, artillery, and planes.

North Korean Premier Kim Il Sung had set 15 August as the date for final victory and the liberation of all Korea. This date marked the fifth anniversary of freedom from Japanese rule. The shortage of food, however, was a matter of acute concern to the enemy. American troops reported that some North Korean soldiers acted as if they were half starved. This was an unexpected situation for the communist planners, who had intended to overrun all of Korea in short order. They had planned to loot and forage, but the South Koreans were hiding their stores of rice. When the invaders found it impossible to commandeer rice from the local population, they had to transport food from depleted warehouses north of the parallel. Many of these storage points had been bombed and all of them were far from southeast Korea. Despite an embarrassing shortage of food, the enemy did not cease his attempts to cut through the Eighth Army defenses. Facing Walker across the Naktong--a wide and difficult barrier--was a disciplined, well-armed, and determined foe.

## 9. Leadership

It is difficult to make an evaluation of the effectiveness of the officers and noncommissioned officers of the opposing forces at the first battle of the Naktong River. If one can believe the many articles and pictures of Life Magazine during August and September of 1950, the Americans had many brave and daring leaders and the soldiers fought effectively. However, the 24th Division was chosen as the first to enter Korea not because of its high combat effectiveness ratings while in Japan (which were the lowest of the four American units in Japan at the time) but because it was geographically the closest to the Korean peninsula. Several thousand troops were transferred to the division just before leaving Japan to bring the 24th up to strength. Since the 24th was committed piece-meal into combat, the leadership did not have a chance to be effective during the first month of combat.

Although the 24th started in Korea with major handicaps--by the time it was defending the Naktong River line its leadership had learned many valuable lessons in the hard fighting it experienced. It had acquired a degree of prowess on the battlefield and adopted fighting methods and tactics that aided survival if nothing else. Air superiority also greatly enhanced (or gave reprieve to some aspects of officer/noncommissioned officer effectiveness that did not have to be tested) leadership effectiveness. Spotter planes were able to locate "lost" American units and to drop orders and instructions.

Poor communications equipment and its scarcity were severe hindrances. The 25 air-mile front the division was to cover further made effective communications by electronic means virtually impossible. Although this is thought of as greatly degrading leadership effectiveness today, it must be remembered that for the period and in comparison to the North Koreans the Americans actually did fairly well.

There is little specific information available about the North Korean forces, but based on their battlefield results, it appears the effectiveness of the North Korean 4th Division leadership was better than the Americans. The 4th Division had been in continuous combat and had advanced great distances under constant air attack. Lines of communication were stretched to the limit and their labor intensive supply system required large amounts of manpower. They attempted to raise this needed manpower by impressing South Koreans into their units as laborers and in some cases as replacements for combat losses in their front line units. The North Koreans also showed a high degree of effectiveness in the use of captured U.S. and South Korean equipment and ammunition to supplement and replace their own stocks.

There is little information available on the training of the North Korean 4th

Division but it appears from their battlefield victories that they were well conditioned for the physical rigors of the Korean terrain and climate. It also seems that if they weren't extensively trained for night operations before their attacking South Korea they learned its intricacy quickly and were able to execute night operations effectively. The same applies to their use of captured equipment, primarily American made heavy weapons such as 105mm artillery. The use of camouflage and deception, especially in resupply operations, also showed good training and discipline.

In contrast, the Americans were caught unprepared for a ground war of this type. The emphasis within the defense structure had been on the Air Force and Navy to provide the first line of defense and counted heavily on the use of strategic nuclear weapons, or the threat of their use, to deter ground conflict.

The American ground forces in Japan were occupation troops and not trained or equipped for sustained combat. They were understrength and the personnel assigned were not physically fit to fight a conventional ground conflict.

About 15 percent of the American forces were veterans of World War II. As that war ended five years earlier one would conclude that few of the company grade officers had experienced combat to any great extent before Korea. This may account for the disproportionately high casualty rate of field grade officers and the repeated use of field grade battalion officers to insure the accomplishment of tasks normally delegated to company officers as described by Appleman in his chapter on the Naktong battle. Also the war diary of the 24th Division mentions problems in eliminating officers for "training or physical unfitness" due to poorly documented cases.

The commander of the 24th Division was Major General John H. Church. He had just been promoted to temporary Major General and assumed command of the division on 23 July, replacing Major General Dean who was reported missing in action. Church was a veteran of World War I and II. He was commissioned infantry in 1917 and had many combat decorations including the Distinguished Service Cross, Silver Star, and three purple hearts. He had commanded the 157th Infantry at Anzio Beachhead and had extensive combat experience in Europe.[61]

The commander of the North Korean 4th Division was Major General Lee Kwon Mu. At age 40 (eight years younger than Church) he also had a distinguished military career. Born in Manchuria, Lee Kwon Mu is reported to have served in the Soviet Army as a lieutenant during World War II and had attended a school in the Soviet Union following the war. In 1948 he returned to Korea to become Chief of Staff of the North Korean Army. He was relieved of this post only to be recalled to command the 4th Division shortly before the invasion. Lee Kwon Mu and his division had received North Korea's highest awards and praise for their achievements before the Naktong battle.

Despite their capable and to this point thoroughly successful, leadership the 4th Division was played out. At the Naktong the North Koreans suffered from severe shortages of food, ammunition and medical supplies, as well as attrition and exhaustion. Also the 24th Division was a more effective and well supplied fighting force and was supported by more fire support than previously available. The timely commitment of reserve forces by General Walker also was key to the 4th Division being repulsed. Until the Naktong, the advantage in leadership based on performance was with the 4th Division.

It is difficult to ascertain whether General Church's assumption of command just before the Naktong battle had any influence on its outcome. The division's war diary does not provide any clues. But the change certainly could not have hurt. General Church had a fine reputation. He showed flexibility in meeting critical situations and made decisive decisions in a timely manner. General Church cleared all civilians from his zone up to five miles behind his front lines, he ordered company commanders relieved when he felt they acted irresponsibly or showed poor judgement. There were numerous cross attachments of units and portions of units. He was not afraid to change the structure of organizations on a daily basis if needed to meet changing situations. Task Force Hyzer is a good example. Formed of engineers, tankers minus their tanks and the division reconnaissance company, the task force was used to replace the ROK 17th Regiment when it was pulled from the division.

A good argument could be made that the 4th Division was defeated by the Americans at the Naktong because of sound application of the principles of war and good leadership. However, an equally good argument could also be made that the North Koreans were literally at the end of their rope and thus unable to achieve the penetration they desired. And that this, more than the 24th Division defeated them.

#### **D. Immediate Military Objectives.**

The mission of the North Korean forces during the latter part of July and early August was to penetrate the defenses around the port city of Pusan and to effectively end organized resistance to North Korea's reunification attempt on the Korean peninsula. The North Koreans hoped to accomplish this by mid August. The mission of the U.N. forces, which were primarily South Korean and American divisions was to stop the North Korean advance on Pusan while allowing time and space for a U.N. build up.

The North Korean 4th Division, which had been successful against the American 24th Division up to this time, was attempting to infiltrate the 24th's Naktong River line defense and to force a penetration leading to an eventual attack on Pusan. The Americans were stretched along a wide front defending in depth with reserves used as local counter attack forces to restore the line where penetrations occurred.

Both the North Korean and U.N. immediate objectives were consistent with their respective strategic and tactical goals.

#### **E. Feasible Courses of Action**

##### **1. Courses of Action Available.**

##### **a. 24th Infantry Division**

The only option available to the 24th Infantry Division between 5 and 16 August, was to defend along the Naktong River with selective local counterattacks to eliminate penetrations. The division with 30 percent casualties and 60-70 percent of its equipment lost had reverted to 8th Army reserve on 22 July. It received orders to block enemy movement to the east in the area of Chirwan-Ni-Chinju on 25 July. The division commenced movement on the 26th and arrived in the Chinju area where it immediately began fighting with elements of the 4th and 6th North Korean Divisions. Approximately half of the 3rd battalion of the 29th Regiment was lost on the 27th. The town of Kochang was lost between the 28th and the 30th of July. The division was now forced to withdraw behind the Naktong River. Between 3-5 August

little fighting occurred as the enemy deliberately halted to build up forces before renewing attacks on 5-6 August. The capability of the 24th Infantry Division to shift from a defensive to an offensive mode gradually occurred through reinforcements attached to the division in the form of the 9th and 27th Infantry Regiment and the 1st Marine Provisional Brigade during the period 7-15 August.[62]

b. 4th North Korean Infantry Division.

The bulk of the 4th, 6th, and 10th North Korean Divisions were in the Chinju area upon the arrival of the 24th Infantry Division on 26 July. Fighting began immediately which lasted until the 24th Infantry Division moved behind the Nakdong River line between 30 July and 3 August. The 4th Infantry Division (N.K.) was definitely on the offensive, attacking all along the 24th Infantry Division's front. However, a lull occurred from 3-5 August as the 4th Infantry Division halted its movement and fighting. Contact during this period consisted of patrolling and probing initiated by the 4th Division while it paused deliberately to build-up its forces. An alternative option available to the 4th Infantry Division on the 3rd of August would have been to continue the attack and not wait on the deliberate build-up. They lost the momentum that they had and allowed the 24th Infantry Division two days to prepare their river line defensive positions and resupply. Additionally, they lost their opportunity to overrun the 24th Infantry Division and turn the battle into an exploitation and pursuit. By 16 August, the 4th Division had expended much of its strength by many battalion and lower attacks. By the time the 1st Marine Provisional Brigade arrived the 4th Infantry Division had been greatly weakened. Defense or withdrawal on 18-19 August were the only options available once reinforcements started pouring into the 24th Division.

2. Were the Courses of Action Feasible?

a. 24th Infantry Division

The 24th Infantry Division's course of action to defend in sector was feasible from the standpoint that there were no other options. The 24th Infantry Division's combat effectiveness was estimated at 40 percent based on available personnel and equipment. The 24th Infantry Division commander believed the division was faced by elements of the 4th, 6th and 10th North Korean Divisions. By 10/11 August the North Korean's were believed to have at least a division east of the river in the south and the 29th Regiment of the 10th Infantry Division (N.K.) in the north. The capabilities of the battered 24th Infantry Division faced with elements of 3 N.K. Divisions allowed only a limited defense of the river line with counterattacks to eliminate local penetrations.[63]

b. 4th North Korean Infantry Division.

G-2 data does not reflect the 4th Infantry Division (N.K.) personnel strength or equipment status as of 2 August so it is hard to determine their capabilities and the feasibility of their deliberate halt to build-up strength from 3-5 August. However, this delay proved to be costly since the 24th Infantry Division's ability to defend the river was at only 40 percent combat capability until more units arrived on the nights of 6/7, 11/12, and 15/16 August. The other area subject to question is the capability of the North Korean Army to coordinate and mass forces in a particular area. Elements of 3 divisions (4th, 6th, and 10th) were facing portions of the 24th Infantry Division during this period but most attacks were battalion size or smaller and were spread across the entire front. When bridgeheads were successful they were not exploited rapidly with large concentrations of troops.

The lack of concentration could be attributed to poor intelligence or reporting. It appears the 4th Infantry Division (N.K.) had the capability to continue the attack on 3 August and defeat the U. S. 24th Infantry Division had it massed forces and exploited penetrations achieved by infiltration of gaps in the 24th Division's front.

### 3. Use of the Estimate of the Situation.

Because there is nothing written on the use of the estimate of the situation by either the 24th Infantry Division or the 4th Infantry Division commanders, the following comments are made based only on the authors' review of what really occurred. The 24th Infantry Division commander was faced with a wide sector to defend with a division at 40 percent combat effectiveness facing elements of 3 divisions. He realized he had no choice but to defend and selected a natural terrain obstacle (the river) to aid him until additional forces arrived. The 4th Infantry Division commander appeared to overestimate the strength and capabilities of the 24th Infantry Division or underestimate his own capabilities. He had the enemy on the run and reduced to a low level of combat effectiveness. The 4th Division commander made a successful bridgehead on 5-6 August but failed to quickly reinforce it and make a break out.[64]

### 4. Staff Estimates and Recommendations.

No information found.

### 5. METT(T)

Same comments as previous paragraph. Based on the actual results of the actions it would appear the 24th Infantry Division commander and his staff used METT(T) effectively throughout the period 5-16 August. They quickly adjusted their orders to the rapidly changing situation to defend, delay, counterattack, and attack as the enemy, terrain, troops available, and time allowed changed. Time and terrain were used effectively during 3-5 August to set up a defense along the river line while the enemy delayed to build-up strength. As new troops were added on the nights of 6/7, 11/12, and 15/16 August counterattacks were effectively used to regain ground, eliminate bridgeheads, and eventually defeat the enemy. The 4th Infantry Division commander and staff appear to have failed primarily in the areas of enemy, time and troops available. They overestimated the forces facing them and did not effectively use the time or troops available. By massing forces the 4th Division could have easily overrun the 24th Infantry Division in the early stages of the defense before additional forces arrived.[65]

### 6. Combat Power.

The 24th Infantry Division Commander continually adjusted his combat power in the various sectors throughout the battle based on the situation. He effectively tailored his forces by creating task forces such as TF Mike and TF Hyzer to meet specific threats in various areas. He split forces such as the 17th South Korean Regiment by placing battalions north and south of the 21st RCT on the high ground to fill the gaps being threatened in this area. He shifted forces from one location to another in economy of force actions. Lastly he concentrated or massed forces effectively to counterattack, to stop penetrations, and to eventually defeat the enemy. The 4th Infantry Division (N.K.) commander continued to make multiple crossing attempts. When he had success, he attempted to cross more people and equipment before he tried break out and exploit his success quickly. The 24th Infantry

Division usually had time to react and was able either to eliminate the penetration or isolate it effectively. Even when a crossing was made the 4th Division continued to attempt other crossings versus effectively massing forces at the point of penetration. The 4th Infantry Division made a crossing on 5-6 August with an estimated 2 battalions in the 34th RCT area. By the 8th of August an estimated regiment had crossed and by the 12th the entire 4th Infantry Division (N.K.) had crossed in the 19th and 34th RCT areas. It took 6-7 days to cross the division and an effective break out was never accomplished against a division at 40 percent combat effectiveness. The 4th Infantry Division (N.K.) commander failed to consider relative combat power of the 24th Infantry Division while his opponent did this effectively and won.[66]

#### F. Notes

[1] Dr. William G. Robertson, Excerpt from forthcoming Leavenworth Paper, used with permission.

[2] Schnabel, James F., Policy and Direction: The First Year, Office of the chief of Military History (Washington: Department of the Army, 1972), pp. 41, 61-79; Appleman, Roy E., South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu, Office of the Chief of Military History (Washington: Department of the Army, 1960), p.59.

[3] Schnabel, Policy, p. 80n; Appleman, pp. 50n, 59, 133, 180; William F. Dean, General Dean's Story (New York: The Viking Press, 1954), p. 13.

[4] Schnabel, pp. 81, 82; Appleman, pp. 59, 65-99, 122.

[5] Appleman, pp. 123-179.

[6] Appleman, pp. 179-180.

[7] Schnabel, p. 89; T. R. Fehrenbach, This Kind of War: A Study in Unpreparedness (New York: The Macmillian Co, 1963), p.128.

[8] Schnabel, pp.71, 80-82; Appleman, pp. 130, 213; Forrest K. Kleinman, "The Tactician of Danger Forward," Army, vol 9, no 4 (November 1958): 26,28; "24th Infantry Division War Diary, For the period 23 July 1950 to 25 August 1950," Daily Diary, 23 July 1950.

[9] 24th Infantry Division War Diary, Daily Diary, 22-31 July 1950; Appleman, pp. 213-250.

[10] 24th Infantry Division War Diary, Daily Diary, 2 August 1950.

[11] Appleman, pp. 205-209.

[12] 24th Infantry Division War Diary, G-3 Journal, entry 470, 021230 August 1950.

[13] 24th Infantry Division War Diary, Daily Diary, 2-3 August 1950, and Adjutant General Daily Diary, 3 August 1950; "21st Infantry Regiment War Diary, for period 23 July 1950 to 25 August 1950, " 2 August 1950; "21st Infantry Regiment Unit Reports," No 26, 3 August 1950; "34th Infantry Regiment War Diary," 2 August 1950; Appleman, pp. 250-251.

[14] Appleman pp. 250, 254-255; Schnabel, p.127.

[15] Roy E. Appleman, United States Army in the Korean War, South to the Nakdong, North to the Yalu (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), Chapter XVII.

[16] 24th Infantry Division G-2/G-3 Diary, July-August 1950.

[17] Appleman, 293.

[18] Appleman, 264.

[19] Appleman, 299.

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[22] Appleman, 293.

[23] Appleman, 294.

[24] Appleman, 299.

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[26] Appleman, 310.

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[34] Enemy Tactics, Eighth U.S. Army Korea, 26 Dec 51, [Ft. Leavenworth Library document # B-17055.72], Pages 2-3, 6-7, 13, 18-27, 55-57, 69-71, 114-116.

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- [53] United States Army in the Korean War, Roy E. Appleman, South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu, 1961 Chapters 15, 17.
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[62] 24th Infantry Division G-2/G-3 Diary, July-August 1950.

[63] 24th Infantry Division G-2/G-3 Diary, July-August 1950.

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[65] 24th Infantry Division G-2/G-3 Diary, July-August 1950.

## IV The Fight

### A. Opening moves

In establishing the Pusan Perimeter, the deployment of U.N. forces on the arc curving from the southwest to the northeast as the battle of the perimeter opened was as follows: U.S. 25th Infantry Division, U.S. 24th Infantry Division, U.S. 1st Cavalry Division and then the ROK Divisions (1st, 6th, 8th, Capital, and the 3rd.). The 24th Division was disposed along 25 miles of the lower Nakdong River. The 21st Infantry held the division right with the 34th Infantry on the left. The newly arrived 19th Infantry was held in division reserve. The 34th Infantry Regiment's front extended along 15,000 yards of the Nakdong and constituted the geographical area that was referred to as the Nakdong River Bulge area. The 3d Battalion, 34th Infantry was on line on the high ground overlooking the river with I Company in the North, L in the center and K to the South. The remaining battalion, the 1st Battalion, 34th Infantry was in regimental reserve in the vicinity of Yongsan. Huge gaps existed between companies occupying the river front line. During the night of 5 August 1950, nearly 800 North Korean soldiers waded and swam the Nakdong, bringing supplies and clothing across on rafts. The enemy crossed at the Ohang ferry site, penetrated between I and L companies, and followed a draw leading to a road called the River Road. The North Koreans continued to advance for nearly two hours undetected before encountering the regimental heavy weapons platoon.

The attack on 5 August caught the 24th Division commander partly by surprise. While he was anticipating an assault on the division's positions, General Church had expected it to come further north in the 21st Infantry Regiment sector. It was not until 0520 that morning that he heard of the attack. The 3d Battalion commander had reported the enemy had crossed the river in force and that he was counterattacking with his reserves. Due to the expanded frontage and command and control difficulties, the 3d battalion commander could not coordinate reinforcement from his other line companies; K Company, far to the south was totally left out of the action.

Following the 3d battalions failure to effectively deal with the enemy infiltration, the 1st Battalion 34th Infantry counterattacked to restore the defensive line. Company C, mounted in trucks, was dispatched followed by A, B, and Weapons companies afoot. Company C was defeated because the enemy was occupying high ground (Cloverleaf Hill) and because its attack was not coordinated with the rest of the battalion. The other two companies counterattacked, A Company managed to link up with L Company which was still in its position overlooking the Nakdong and B Company's advance was stopped by the enemy on Cloverleaf Hill. When the 1st battalion counterattack was in progress, I Company abandoned its position northward overlooking the river and was joined by the heavy weapons company, a mortar platoon and the 26th anti-aircraft automatic weapons battalion. They eventually were ordered to go back and the company commander was relieved. The enemy was east of the river in the bulge area by this time. General Church ordered the 19th Infantry to attack west along the northern flank of the 34th regiment. The 1st Infantry Battalion counterattack managed to drive back the enemy advance, regain part of Cloverleaf Hill and retain the positions held by K and L companies of the 3rd Infantry Battalion.

During the night of 6-7 August, the enemy succeeded in moving reinforcements to the east side of the river in the bulge area. On the third night (7-8 August), two enemy battalions crossed the river. The continuation of the American counterattack by the 19th Infantry and B Company of the 34th Infantry was a weak effort. Heat and

lack of food and water were contributing factors in the failure of the counterattack. Company B fell back and the North Koreans occupied most of Cloverleaf Hill and Obong-ni Ridge. This important high ground dominated the American main supply routes stretching back to Yongsan.

On the morning of 7 August, General Church received the 9th Infantry Regiment as reinforcements; they arrived in the bulge about 0830 hours, 8 August. It was estimated that the 24th Division was now only 40 percent combat effective. General Church reorganized his forces under Colonel Hill, 9th Regiment Commander, and ordered him to attack and restore the river line. Task Force Hill consisting of the 9th and 19th regiments as the main force attacked the enemy with the 34th regiment protecting the left flank. This attack on the 11th of August failed completely because the enemy was able to reinforce his positions with heavy equipment and artillery. American officer losses were severe and General Church had to change his order from attack to defend.

By 11 August it became apparent that enemy forces had penetrated beyond Task Force Hill to the vicinity of Yongsan. Although at the time the 24th Division claimed to not know from where the enemy units had come, it later became evident that they had moved around the main battle positions at Cloverleaf and Obong-ni Ridges.

The enemy surprised U.S. forces in the area and captured the bridge over the Naktong at Namji-ri. This cut the Yongsan-Masan road breaking the only direct vehicular communications link to the 25th Division. General Church sent an engineer combat battalion to Yongsan while Eighth Army sent a battalion of the 27th Infantry from the Army reserve at Masan.

During 11-12 August the North Koreans were able to reinforce their roadblock east of Yongsan, extending their control of the road. Elements of Task Force Hill were sent to help break the roadblock and an assemblage of troops from eight different units was organized under the division headquarters company commander and moved east to block further penetration of enemy units into the area.

In clearing the area south of Yongsan, elements of the 27th Infantry uncovered numerous enemy soldiers disguised as refugees. In their drive north the 27th was successful in overrunning many of the entrenched North Korean positions and in securing the high ground to the northeast of Yongsan. The 27th Infantry joined with elements of Task Force Hill on 13 August eliminating the enemy's deepest penetration of the battle. The fast action taken by Eighth Army and the 24th Division's commitment of headquarters and engineer troops is credited with neutralizing the enemy's dangerous threat to the 24th Division's rear.

General Walker, being pressed at many points on the Pusan Perimeter, became impatient with the failure of Task Force Hill to solve the Naktong Bulge situation. Although he did not believe MG Church's appraisal that the entire 4th Division was now across the Naktong, he knew the 24th Division would have to be reinforced if the enemy was to be thrown back across the river. With the Bulge battle now stalemated, LTG Walker now attached the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade to the 24th Division with instructions to clear the matter up fast. The Marine brigade was available for commitment to the Bulge battle by the 16th of August, however, the Marine commander did not want to conduct any attacks until carrier based Marine Corsairs were available for close support. These squadrons were to be in position by 17 August, thus plans were made to attack that day.

The original plan envisioned by MG Church was a coordinated attack by Task Force Hill on the Cloverleaf and the Marines on Obong-ni Ridge. MG Church viewed the two ridges as interlocking and mutually supporting, hence the need to attack both positions simultaneously.

The Marine commander, believed to the contrary, that the ridges were separate and could be attacked independently. His request to attack and secure Obong-Ni ridge prior to the 9th Infantry regiment assaulting was, regrettably, approved by MG Church for 0800, 17 August 1950.

The attack of the Marines against Obong-ni failed. It failed because the two ridges were in fact interlocking enemy positions. Without the supporting attack on Cloverleaf Ridge by the 9th Infantry Regiment to distract the occupants, the Marines were caught in the cross fire and cut down. By noon on the 17th it was obvious the Marines were going to be repulsed. The 2d battalion, 5th Marines in seven hours lost almost 60 percent of the riflemen engaged in the attack.

Convinced now of the necessity for a coordinated attack against the two ridges, the Marine commander agreed to a joint attack with the 9th Infantry Regiment against the twin ridge complex. A preparatory fire was delivered just before 1600 with the attack jumping off on the hour. The 2d Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment easily occupied Cloverleaf Ridge. The Marines, with more difficulty but now supported by suppressive fires from the 9th Regiment on Cloverleaf succeeded in occupying Obong-ni Ridge. For the first time the action was characterized by a distinct combined arms flavor and a methodical tactical procedure. Heavy air and artillery attacks supported ground attacks and in many instances forced the enemy from their positions.

During the night of 17 August, the North Korean units counterattacked, but the Marines were ready and waiting. Trip flares were set up; one-quarter of the men remained on alert at all times; mortars and artillery were registered on likely avenues of approach to Obong-ni and Cloverleaf. The attack commenced at 0230, 18 August and lasted until dawn. When daylight arrived the Americans still held the ridges, but the cost had been high, almost 50 percent in some companies. After daylight, the Marines reorganized and now in conjunction with the 19th and 34th Infantry Regiments drove forward from the ridge lines toward the line of hills overlooking the Naktong. The attacks met little effective opposition as the enemy commander had elected to withdraw his depleted forces back across the river. This decision was quickly detected by elements of the 19th Infantry on Ohang Hill who could see groups of North Koreans swimming back across the river. Time on target artillery fire and fighter aircraft repeatedly hit these groups. By afternoon elements of the U.S. forces patrolling to the river found no enemy troops.

The 4th Division lost all its heavy equipment and most of its weapons in the Naktong bulge. Enemy casualties were not exactly known but were believed to be heavy. The 24th Division buried 1,200 enemy dead. Each of the enemy's three rifle regiments had no more than 400 men recross the river. Pow accounts report that about half of their wounded died. The entire division numbered about 3,500 on 19 August 1950.

#### **B. Key Events of the Battle**

The battle of the Naktong Bulge was in itself a turning point. It was a turning point in that United Nations forces (predominately U.S.) absorbed the force of the North Korean attack, turned it back and achieved victory.

The North Koreans were attempting to penetrate the U.N. lines to attack Pusan and its communication system. Their plan involved attacking along four lines of advance simultaneously believing they would ultimately succeed along one of them. The North Korean 4th Division was assigned a line of advance through the Naktong Bulge to the rail and road lines at Miryang. This line of advance placed them in opposition to the U.S. 24th Infantry Division which was defending in the lower Naktong.

Although not much is known about the plan of the North Korean 4th Division, we can glean some insight into the division commander's plans from the available material. The North Koreans used small unit tactics in crossing the Naktong River and infiltrating into the 24th Division zone of operation. They were extremely successful at this and did manage over a period of time to cross the entire division. In using small unit tactics they were able to penetrate to the rear of the 24th Division and succeeded in cutting 6000 yards of the Division's Main Supply Route (MSR) impeding U.S. logistical support. By denying the 24th Division the use of the Yongsan-Miryang road, the greatest tactical advantage accrued to the North Koreans, as all combat elements of the 24th Division had to be supplied over the Changnyong-Changdo road. This road was not capable of handling the necessary traffic to provide the requisite logistical support.

It appears that the North Korean goal was to disrupt the 24th Division Lines of Communication (LOC's) while applying pressure throughout the division's zone of operations using small unit tactics. Ultimately the 24th Division would be worn down and short of supplies, owing to the severing of the primary MSR. The hoped for result, was a break in the division's defense which they would exploit in their goal of attacking Pusan.

In pursuing his objective, the commander of the North Korean 4th Division did anticipate one event well. The 24th Division Commander, MG Church considered the northern part of the division zone the more difficult to defend and reinforce because of its poor road network. Church, therefore, anticipated the North Korean attack in that part of his zone rather than in the south where the attack really occurred. In addition to confusing Church about the location of the attack, the North Koreans were successful in following a line of attack that took advantage of unit boundaries to further confuse the defenders and aid their penetration. Once across the river they bypassed strongpoints in their attempt to strike deep into the 24th Division zone.

Although the commander of the North Korean 4th Division anticipated well in his preparation for the attack and used good judgement in small unit crossings of the river, he was never able to consolidate his division on the eastern side of the Naktong to fight the "decisive battle." In by-passing strongpoints to penetrate to the rear of the 24th Division he simply sent an inferior force deep into the division zone to be isolated from the rest of its unit. None of these small North Korean units had the power to hold key terrain, or defeat 24th Division units.

On the U.S. side there were several factors that influenced the outcome of the battle. Although MG Church guessed wrong on where the main North Korean attack would come and how soon it would come, he adjusted quickly.

An early decision by the U.N./U.S. forces was to change the boundaries of the 24th Division by moving its northern boundary with the 1st Cavalry Division further south. This tightened and bolstered defenses.

Another major event was MG Church's decision to put Col Hill in command of all troops in the Naktong Bulge. This insured unity of effort for the first time since the battle had begun and significantly enhanced the command and control. It was TF Hill that began the series of major counterattacks on 14 August that was to ultimately defeat the North Korean's and drive them from the bulge. This unity of command also bore fruit during the second attack on Obong-Ni when the efforts of the 9th Regiment on Cloverleaf were successfully coordinated with the Marines attacking at Obong-Ni.

The U.S. decision to defend in depth was also a critical decision affecting the outcome of the battle. It prevented the North Koreans from penetrating, holding the shoulders and pouring through the defensive perimeter. Instead they were absorbed, isolated and defeated. One might call it a bend but not break defense.[2]

### C. Outcome of the Battle

Clearly in this battle the 24th Division enjoyed a victory. At the end of the battle the entire North Korean 4th Division numbered only 3,500 men. It began the battle with about 7,000. After the Obong-Ni battle alone, enemy weapons captured or destroyed included: 18 heavy machine guns, 25 light machine guns, 63 sub-machine guns, eight anti-tank rifles, one 3.5 inch rocket launcher and quantities of ammunition and grenades. The destruction, for all practical purposes of the North Korean 4th Division in the battle of the Naktong Bulge was the greatest setback suffered thus far by the North Korean Army.

There would appear to be several reasons for the enemy defeat. Although the North Koreans were successful in crossing the river in force, by using small unit tactics, they were never able to take advantage of this success. Once across the river they were not able to consolidate their forces and penetrate the remains of the 24th Division's defenses. Essentially they violated the principle of mass and although they were able to hold some key terrain momentarily, they were not capable of breaking through the rest of the division.

The 24th Division, of course, had a lot to do with the North Korean lack of success. First the decisions to adjust division boundaries, to consolidate command of units in the bulge under Col Hill, and to defend in depth made the task of the North Koreans difficult.

Additionally, the use of counterattacks by the U.S. was effective in keeping the North Koreans off balance and not allowing them to mass. One such attack by TF Kean at Mason surprised and broke up massing North Korean troops before they could attack the American positions.

The use of air strikes and field artillery also played a major role in the North Korean defeat. Air strikes prevented reinforcement of units that had crossed the Naktong and successfully interdicted the resupply of those units. A successful Deep Battle was fought. Field artillery was massed and fired at crossing sites and consolidation points east of the river preventing the North Korean units from consolidating and establishing any positive command and control.[3][4]

### D. Notes:

[1] The Army, Navy, Air-Force Journal, 26 August 1950

[2] Roy E. Appleman, United States Army in the Korean War, South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961).

[3] Ibid.

[4] Dr William G. Robertson, CSI, USACSGC Defensive Tactics advance sheet 28 Feb 83.



## V Significance of the Action

### A. Immediate Significance

During the Naktong Bulge battle, the 24th Infantry Division with reinforcement from the 5th Marine Regiment, decisively defeated the North Korean 4th Infantry Division. For all practical purposes, this action around the Naktong River would mark the furthest penetration by the enemy into South Korea for the remainder of the war. By the end of the battle the enemy division had lost nearly all its equipment and weapons. "The 4th Division never recovered from this battle until after the Chinese entered the war and it was reconstituted." [1] The enemy had shot its wad. It had neither the men or material to continue a drive south to reach its strategical and tactical objective of Pusan. Its lines of communication were stretched to the breaking point and U.S. reinforcements were pouring into the country daily.

For the first time the U.S. Eighth Army and ROK had withdrawn into a perimeter defense just north of Pusan and were able to form a stabilized, connected defensive position. North Korean tactics of flank envelopment were not effective against a continuous defensive line and failed to produce the desired result. Classical principles of defense were applied in the battle of the Naktong Bulge and throughout the Pusan Perimeter using interior lines of communication for movement of supplies and reinforcements, superior fire power to blunt the offensive attacks and decimate the enemy. At the conclusion of the battle on 19 August, it was estimated that total North Korean Army strength fell below the combined strength of the U.S. and ROK Armies. North Korean combat effectiveness was far below what it had been before the start of the battle. They had lost tremendous amounts of trained troops, tanks and heavy weapons. But in spite of an increasingly desperate situation, they would attempt one last offensive to break through American positions. Begun on 31 August, battles raged around the perimeter for two more weeks with neither side making any substantial progress. The Inchon landing on 15-16 September, far behind the enemy's front, finally insured the security of Pusan. At that point, U.S. and ROK forces began their break-out, pursuing the enemy north to the Yalu.

Had the North Koreans been able to push through the perimeter defenses and seize Pusan, the conventional war would probably have ended quickly. There was no other supply base or port in Korea not in enemy hands. Plans had been developed for the evacuation from the peninsula if it appeared that the North was about to take Pusan. Not only was the defense of the Naktong a tactical victory for U.S. and ROK Armies, it was a strategic victory as well. It ended any hope the North had of a quick victory without the help of her allies. The defense of the perimeter was a battle of attrition which bought time as reserve units began arriving in increasing numbers. Future operations would be conducted differently by both sides from that point on.

### B. Military "Lessons Learned"

The First Battle of the Naktong Bulge taught many lessons. From Headquarters Eighth Army down to the individual soldier on the line, the capability of the opponent had been underestimated. U.S. forces were forced to cover an extended frontage with too few troops. With only the most meager reserves, General Church was forced to continually shift his units and positions to meet the most immediate threat. The North Korean tactics employed up to that point consisted of grand maneuvers, fixing forces to their front then, usually at night, enveloping them on the flanks and striking to the rear, attacking command posts, artillery positions and supply points. The 24th Division was finally able to tie-in with adjacent ROK

and U.S. units, securing their flanks and closing lines to infiltration. Until this point, successful enemy infiltration in small groups was common. The division placed companies and battalions in depth, 1,000 to 2,000 yards between units but with little flank protection on the hillsides. This proved to be a successful tactic in limiting flank envelopments and infiltration. The division also defended by lightly outposting their front lines with many small units of squad and platoon size. Larger units were used as mobile reserves to counterattack enemy penetrations. Aggressive action to maintain contact was used with some success, counterattacking whenever possible to prevent enemy build-up and to keep him off balance. In so doing, the enemy was deceived about the strength of the 24th Division and the morale of the U.S. forces began to improve.

While the North Koreans were subjected to massive amounts of interdiction against their movement and resupply to the south, they succeeded in conducting significant movements without being detected. Owing partly to their own stealth and secrecy but also from frequent U.S. "breakdown of communication," they moved large amounts of men and materiel up to and even through U.S. lines before being engaged. Daily sightings reported their progressive movements towards the 24th Division and yet, on 11 August, the division reported the presence of many North Korean infiltrators in their southern sector--seemingly coming from nowhere. Without the benefit of total secrecy or surprise, the enemy was able to move into position to control about 6,000 yards of the division's main supply route east of Yongsan. The fog of war contributed to the "sketchy picture of the enemy situation" but there seems to have been a breakdown in applying intelligence information to ground operations. Only after the battle was over did captured documents show that the entire North Korean 4th Division had crossed the Nakdong.

As in previous defensive engagements, the division was forced to use engineers as riflemen to plug gaps and fight as infantry. All units realized a greater need for light automatic weapons and mortars. Heavy equipment was a burden to the foot soldier. The divisional war diaries of the period suggest that the infantry relied too much on transportation--they frequently rode when they should have been dismounted. It was obvious that they were not prepared or able to maneuver as effectively as their more sturdy opponent and were susceptible to ambush by an enemy who had slipped into the hills. The rugged terrain and extremely hot and humid weather of August contributed significantly to battle fatigue. The infantryman on the move quickly discarded equipment and clothing that he deemed non-essential, but defensive operations permitted him to possess more supplies. South Korean units, fighting along side the 24th Division, handled themselves well and proved to the skeptical G.I.'s that with adequate provisions, they could hold their own against their northern foe.

By analyzing the doctrine and tactics used by the 24th Division against today's Airland Battle Doctrine plus Operational Concepts and Imperatives of Modern Combat, several conclusions that are useful to contemporary military students can be drawn. A few of the more obvious examples applicable during the Nakdong Battle are the designation of the main effort, the use of reserves, rear area combat operations, and the need for coordinating combined arms team operations.

Within the defensive framework of today's doctrine, there are five elements to address: first, the division did not attempt a "deep battle" effort to go out and get behind the enemy, disrupt his attack and cause him to commit his forces prematurely. But then, the 24th Division was barely able to maintain a perimeter defensive line in their sector. They had neither the resources nor the will to go deep. Secondly, for pretty much the same reason, there was not a covering force

area (CFA). The river line designated the main battle area (MBA) and General Church found that he was committed in the MBA without having been able to inflict damage to the enemy any sooner. Rear area combat operations (RACO) was a serious concern throughout the battle and required increasingly heavy commitments of reserve forces to meet rear area threats. And lastly, the use of reserves played a significant role, plugging the gaps in the lines, reinforcing, counterattacking, and responding to RACO.

The tenet's of the Airland Battle--initiative, depth, agility, and synchronization, were evident on both sides in varying degrees. The strength and fiber of a unit will determine its ability to do well; at this point, both armies were quite worn. MG Church and his regimental commanders understood the importance of initiative at the tactical level and repeatedly ordered counterattacks to regain ground and keep the enemy off balance. The division defended in depth and learned that it could inhibit but not prevent infiltration. The counterattacks also provided a measure of depth, especially when clearing Yongsan. The division did not display great amounts of agility and remained rather static although Eighth Army's use of reserves was noteworthy. Synchronization of all forces and weapons varied in degrees during the battle. Successful attacks required continuing coordination, the 5th Marine Regiment displayed examples of both success and failure.

The imperatives of modern combat were also evident during the battle. Failure at times, to follow them resulted in serious consequences.

By 15 August, the picture did not look good for the American forces. This situation called for an attack on Obong-ni Ridge, a key terrain position within the Naktong bulge. It would be designated as a main effort, requiring also a unity of effort (as was TF Hill). General Church was to command the coordinated attack of all army and marine troops. General Church allowed the 5th Marine Regiment to attack Obong-ni alone, piecemeal without artillery--no unity of effort or use of effective combined arms support from the artillery. The marines were cut down by flank and enfilade fire and were forced to withdraw, sustaining almost 60 percent casualties. To be successful, the attack required a unity of effort with a coordinated, mutually supporting effort between and among the adjacent units and arms. Cloverleaf on the right, was attacked simultaneously after both ridges had received artillery preparations. Without enemy fire from the flanks, the marines captured the hill. Of the maneuver forces committed to counterattack (9th Infantry Regiment, 19th Infantry Regiment, 34th Infantry Regiment, 1-21 Infantry, and the 5th Marine Regiment), the initial assault consisted of only 120-130 marines. Combined arms teams were used to knock out 3 T-34 tanks just hours later. Using air strikes, 75mm recoilless rifles, 3.5 inch rocket launchers and American Pershings (M-26's), the enemy tanks, without support of infantry, didn't stand a chance. What limited strengths the division possessed were not directed against enemy weakness. Most assaults were head on, up hill. Until the final attack at Obong-ni Ridge, no attempt was made to infiltrate the North Korean lines or flanks. The division initiated no night attacks. Both sides understood and appreciated key terrain. By controlling the high ground at river crossing sites, the North Koreans could cross unobserved. Closing a portion of the division's Main Supply Route (MSR) forced the Americans to react quickly or be cut off from further resupply. The Americans were able to do little more than harass the withdrawing enemy for there was no real effort at pursuit.

### C. Long-term Significance

The long-term effects of the battle are more difficult to assess because the

Naktong was quickly overcome by other events; ie. the Inchon landing. Up to this point, the 1st Battle of the Naktong Bulge (as it would later be named) was the most significant victory for the United Nations Forces. An entire enemy division had been decisively defeated--but at some cost to the U.S. 24th Infantry Division. There would be two more weeks of fighting around the Naktong as other enemy units tenaciously attempted to drive south. The defeat suffered by the North Korean 4th Division did not cause North Korea to give up or contemplate withdrawal. National objectives did not change nor did the combatant's resolve weaken. As discussed, had the battle ended differently with Pusan exposed, surely the eventual outcome could have been far different. As it turned out, the Inchon landing produced a dramatic change in the conduct of operations. Eventually, the North Koreans did recover but were never as capable as during June, July and August, 1950. Strategic bombing and incessant combat for three months greatly reduced his ability to wage war. Without Chinese intervention, North Korea could have no hope of victory.

#### D. Notes

[1] Roy E. Appleman, South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu, p. 318.

1

105mm artillery, 35  
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